Hans Baldung Grien's Reworking of Religious Motifs in His Early Career

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INTRODUCTION: Hans Baldung Grien and his Era

With elite Strasbourg officials as his closest kin, Hans Baldung Grien's upbringing immediately sets him apart from other artists of the era, whom, as Joseph Leo Koerner remarks, "came at best from middle-class, artisanal families," as a general rule.[1] Like other items in the relatively complete but frustratingly impersonal record of the artist's biography that historians have been able to compile from "bills, records in Strasbourg civil books or documentary references to his financial standing," this piece of information invites speculations that can never be fully borne out.[2] By choosing a path that set him apart from his own family, he made what would seem to have been an unusual, potentially difficult, choice, but his motives cannot be productively interrogated to any significant extent. We know the shape of Baldung's life, but little of its details, and still less of the principles that guided it.

While this is perhaps true of many artists, the lively and distinctive nature of his art, as well as the comparative wealth of information on the worldview of his mentor, Albrecht Dürer, to which we are privy makes the lack of personal writings from Baldung all the more keenly felt.[3] In its absence, we must account for the basic facts of his biography while understanding that there is a limit to what it might reveal. Hans Baldung Grien was born towards the end of 1484 or the beginning of 1485, probably[4] to Johann Baldung, an attorney to the Bishop of

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[1] Baldung's family situation discussed in Thomas A. Brady, "The Social Place of a German Renaissance

[2] Sabine Söll-Tauchert, *Hans Baldung Grien (1484/85-1545) : Selbstbildnis und Selbstinszenierung* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2010), 19.

[3] Especially helpful in this regard are his diaries. Albrecht Dürer, *Dürer's Record of Journeys to Venice and the Low Countries*, ed. Robert Fry (New York: Dover Publications, 1995).

[4] While Shestack in page 4-5 of his "Introduction" in *Hans Baldung Grien: Prints and Drawings*, ed. Alan Shestack and James H. Marrow (New Haven: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), Brady on page 298 of his article on "The Social Place of the Renaissance Artist," and Koerner on page 250 of *The Moment of Self Portraiture in German Renaissance Art* all assume that Johann was Hans's father, Bodo

Strasbourg and later episcopal official, likely educated at the University of Heidelberg, and originally from Schwäbisch Gmünd.[5] Since his other relatives held similarly illustrious positions as did Johann –his uncle Hieronymous was the personal physician to Maximilian I, and his brother Caspar replaced Sebastian Brant as city advocate –Hans was "the only male Baldung in two generations…who was not a university-trained lawyer and who did not enter the service of a prince."[6]

Like his impetus for pursuing this alternative path, the date and atelier at which Baldung commenced his art studies is unknown.[7] "Already trained a journeyman" by the time of his circa 1503 arrival in Dürer's studio, he remained there throughout his teacher's second sojourn to Italy in 1506, at which time Oettinger and Knappe have suggested he ran the workshop in his stead.[8] During his apprenticeship to Dürer, Baldung completed woodcut illustrations for two works by Ulrich Pinder, *Der beschlossen Gart des Rosenkrants Marie* in 1505 and *Speculum passionis* in 1507,[9] some stained glass work, and two major retables that were eventually displayed in Albrecht of Brandenburg's Halle Cathedral, which will be discussed in chapter one.[10] While no

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Brinkmann more recently reminds us that this is not a confirmed fact, writing that "we know neither the name of [Baldung's] father nor where he received his training." See Bodo Brinkmann, "The Artist," in *Witches' Lust and the Fall of Man: The Strange Fantasies of Hans Baldung Grien* (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2007), 19. Johann's likely employment discussed in Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art*, 250.

[5] As indicated by the signature on the inscription on the back of the Freiburg altar –see Söll-Tauchert, *Hans Baldung Grien (1484/85-1545) : Selbstbildnis und Selbstinszenierung*, 20 –as well as documents in Gmünd itself –Shestack, "Introduction," 4, note 5.Shestack, "Introduction," 4, note 5.

[6] Brady, "The Social Place of a German Renaissance Artist: Hans Baldung Grien (1484/85-1545) at Strasbourg," 304.Brady, "The Social Place of a German Renaissance Artist," 304.

[7] Söll-Tauchert, *Hans Baldung Grien (1484/85-1545) : Selbstbildnis Und Selbstinszenierung*, 20.Söll-Tauchert, *Selbstbildnis und Selbstinszenierung*, 20.

[8] Brinkmann, "The Artist," 19; Karl Oettinger and Karl-Adolf Knappe, *Hans Baldung Grien und Albrecht Dürer in Nürnberg* (Nuremberg: Carl Verlag, 1963), 7–8. Referenced in Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art*, 250, 496 note 10.

[9] Giulia Bartrum, "Hans Baldung, Called Grien," in *German Renaissance Prints* (London: British Museum Press, 1995), 67.

[10] *Speculum passionis* mentioned in Bartrum, 67. Stained glass work discussed in Barbara Butts and Lee Hendrix, "Hans Baldung Grien," in *Painting on Light : Drawings and Stained Glass in the Age of Dürer*

correspondence between the two remains, evidence persists of their continued contact and, perhaps, even friendship, as hinted at by the lock of Dürer's hair that Baldung came to own and documentation that the former brought some of his student's woodcuts with him to the Netherlands.[11] At some point during his studies with Dürer, Baldung also acquired his nickname "Grien," which, as Bodo Brinkmann notes, may have indicated a color preference, or simply served to distinguish him from the other pupils named Hans –Schäuflein and Suess von Kulmbach –apprenticing in the same studio.[12]

With the connections ushered in by his apprenticeship to Dürer, Baldung appears to have quickly attained a comfortable lifestyle upon his return to Strasbourg in 1509.[13] A year later, he wedded Margarethe Herlin, daughter of a local merchant family.[14] He became an active member of the artist's guild *zur Steltz,* and, with his new wife, joined the confraternity of Saint Lawrence.[15] Soon after, he received the commission for a well-paying (but later critically

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and Holbein, ed. Scott C. Wolf (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum in collaboration with the Saint Louis Art Museum, 2000), 128, http://d2aohiyo3d3idm.cloudfront.net/publications/virtuallibrary/089236579X.pdf. Information on the von Wettin altarpieces comes from Söll-Tauchert, *Hans Baldung Grien (1484/85-1545) : Selbstbildnis und Selbstinszenierung*, 114.

[11] Baldung's potential friendship with Dürer is touched upon in Jeffrey Chipps Smith, "Dürer's Losses and the Dilemmas of Being," in *Enduring Loss in Early Modern Germany*, ed. Lynne Tatlock (Boston ; Leiden: Brill ; ProQuest Ebook Central, 2010), 98, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu. That Dürer may have brought Baldung's woodcuts with him for sale in the Netherlands is mentioned in Arthur Burkhard, *The Freiburg Altar of Hans Baldung* (Munich: Fr. Bruckmann, 1970), 6.

[12] Brinkmann, "The Artist," 19. This nickname constitutes yet another intriguing mystery-detail; von der Osten, on page 300f of his *Hans Baldung Grien: Gemälde und Dokumente* (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 1983), referenced in Bartrum, *German Renaissance Prints,* 67, suggests a connection to the word "Grienhans," or devil, as befits some of his demoniac subject matter.

[13] Although Koerner suggests that these connections were mutual, implying that Baldung's highly ranking family gave the status-conscious Dürer cause or even incentive to trust in him. Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art*, 250.

[14] Brady, "The Social Place of a German Renaissance Artist: Hans Baldung Grien (1484/85-1545) at Strasbourg," 298, 304.

[15] Ibid, 299.

lambasted) retable in Freiburg im Bresau, a commission he spent several years completing on site before returning to Strasbourg permanently in 1517.[16]

After this point, his integration into Strasbourg society intensified; although he did not pursue political endeavors to the same extent as did his brethren, he participated regularly in the city's social and economic life. With Margarethe, he invested his salary from the Freiburg Altar into "various economic transactions, like the purchase and selling of property and buildings, [and] loan transactions with farmers."[17] Of their practice of "lending…small sums at interest to the urban poor and to peasants," Thomas A. Brady writes that "[p]erhaps no form of investment was more common in sixteenth-century Strasbourg," despite the fact that it skirted usury.[18] Though the Reformation eventually diminished demand for retables, Baldung kept up a consistent woodcut practice and continued to garner important painting commissions, like the circa 1520 *Baptism of Christ* at Frankfurt, eventually purchasing a house in the "fashionable" rue Brûlée district.[19] Brinkmann and Weber am Bach both observe Baldung's willingness to take on positions of increased leadership as his life went on, accepting work as a "lay assessor" in 1533, and even attaining the rank of town councilor in the last year of his life.[20]

For all the questions that Hans Baldung Grien's biographical sketch fails to answer about his choices as artist, it is nevertheless valuable from a research perspective, in particular for what it illustrates about the city in which he lived. Though this thesis centers around the first decade or

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[16] Commission mentioned in Burkhard, *The Freiburg Altar of Hans Baldung*, 7. Distaste for this altarpiece ran specially high at the beginning of the 20th c by "Curjel, Pinder, Hugelshofer" and many others. Shestack, "Introduction," 12. Baldung's return to Strasbourg noted in Brady, "The Social Place of a German Renaissance Artist," 299.

[17] Sibylle Weber am Bach, *Hans Baldung Grien (1484/85-1545): Marienbilder in der Reformation*, ed. Frank Büttner and Hans Ramisch (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2006), 63. Translation mine.

[18] Brady, "The Social Place of a German Renaissance Artist: Hans Baldung Grien (1484/85-1545) at Strasbourg," 302.

[19] Diminished demand for retables discussed in ibid, 312, as is Baldung's residence in the rue Brûlée –see page 299. Meanwhile, the *Baptism of Christ* references comes from Shestack, "Introduction," 15.

[20] Brinkmann, "The Artist," 21.

so of his independent career, an overview of his entire life further contextualizes his cultural environment. The Reformation era was a famously tumultuous one for religious art, as the reevaluation of its role within a Protestant church led to what Sergiusz Michalski describes as a "hostility to religious images" that often culminated in their iconoclastic "destruction through…more or less ostentatious public acts."[21] In Strasbourg, Reformation ideals spread quickly, with Luther's Theses reaching Alt-St. Peter by 1518, and promptly republished, moving swiftly throughout the city's well-developed printing networks.[22] By 1523, the Magistrat, Strasbourg's governing body, mandated that "nothing but the holy Gospel" be preached.[23] By 1524, fearing further iconoclasm after the attack on St. Aurelia's relics, they ordered that "all pictures" be carefully removed from the city's churches, and instituted well-enforced penalties for those who sought to "destroy or carry off" religious items.[24]

While these mandates do indeed speak to the speed and comprehension with which Protestantism reached Strasbourg, the official reflection of the Reformation discernible through these governmental rulings and iconoclastic incidents constitutes an incomplete picture that close analysis of Baldung's work can help rectify.[25] The seeming contradictions his oeuvre puts forth –a living-dead Christ, a Protestant-adjacent Mary, mankind fallen before the Fall –took root not

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[21] Sergiusz Michalski, *Reformation and the Visual Arts : The Protestant Image Question in Western and Eastern Europe* (London: Taylor and Francis ; ProQuest Ebook Central, 1993), 75, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu.

[22] Weber am Bach, *Hans Baldung Grien (1484/85-1545): Marienbilder in der Reformation*, 53. Translation mine.

[23] Ibid, 54.

[24] Miriam Usher Chrisman, *Strasbourg and the Reform: A Study in the Process of Change* (New Haven ; London: Yale University Press, 1967), 144. For more on the destruction of St. Aurelia's relics, see Lee Palmer Wandel, *Voracious Idols and Violent Hands : Iconoclasm in Reformation Zurich, Strasbourg, and Basel* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 117.

[25] See also the compelling combination of historical background and statistical data on Strasbourg's humanism compiled by Chrisman in *Lay Culture, Learned Culture: Books and Social Change in Strasbourg, 1480-1599* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982). Especially useful are her graphs comparing the volume of Catholic and Protestant books produced before and after the Reformation, seen in pages 288-289.

only thanks to his singular talents and social position, but due to the diversity of perspectives that Strasbourg intellectuals were able to sustain at that time.[26] In his introduction to the *Reformation of the Image,* Koerner groups Baldung with a "phenomenal generation of artists" who, to the mind of art historians dismayed by the perceived "decline" in Northern art after 1520, narrowly evaded the brunt of Reformation creativity-stifling that the codification and regimentation of religious images.[27]

Though Koerner correctly identifies Baldung's lack of overt affiliation with Protestantism, the artist, whose bold distortions of the human body, clever re-workings of Dürer's compositions, and often jarring combinations of religious subject matter and mood make him easy to deem an outlier, must nevertheless be understood as a product of his time.[28] While acknowledging the features of his work that read, in the broader context of his epoch, as unusual is certainly important, such an endeavor must also be grounded om an understanding of the social forces that facilitated his unique artistic mode. This comprises, to my mind, both a research difficulty and a counter-intuitive boon. By learning more about the intellectual milieu of Strasbourg in Baldung's day, one better understands how his art was made possible. By the same token, a thoughtful investigation of the oeuvre of this singular artist has implications for the Northern society in which he operated.

As with any other facet of his perspective, accessing Baldung's religious beliefs remains something of an exercise in futility. Instead of making inferences, we must subsist on what is

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[26] See, of course, the entirety of Weber am Bach's *Marienbilder in der Reformation,* where she argues that Protestantism did not preclude an audience for Marian imagery like that supplied by Baldung.
[27] As his book continues, Koerner goes on to subvert the assumption of the Protestant era as a time of artistic drought. Joseph Leo Koerner, *The Reformation of the Image* (London: Reaktion Books, Limited ; ProQuest Ebook Central, 2004), 27, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu.
[28] As Koerner insists constantly throughout *The Moment of Self Portraiture* and reiterates in *The Reformation of the Image,* Baldung's handlings of the body often comprise both real and metaphorical "disfigure[ation]s." Koerner, 114.

known. Throughout his career, he completed portraits of both Catholic and Protestant figures, but would not serve as witness in a 1524 "episcopal tribunal," and his brief term as town councilor constitutes at least an outward acceptance of Protestant leadership, since Catholics in Strasbourg were not permitted to hold office by 1545.[29] These facts, while broadly indicative of his conformity, are far from conclusive evidence of Protestant belief. Beyond this official stance, Weber am Bach has looked at evidence such as the 1534 *Epicedion* of composer Thomas Sporer, "a close friend of Baldung Grien's," as they relate to his association with the so-called "Epicurean" Dissenters.[30] The term Epicurean is a complex one in that, as Kirk M. Summers notes, "no one identified themselves as such during this period."[31] Instead, the appellation was applied by Calvin and Strasbourg-based reformer Martin Bucer in order to, as Jean Wirth puts it, "attack at once the ideas and the personal morality" of "the cultivated unbelievers."[32]

As Wirth argues, the concept and, hence, even the existence of unbelief or atheism in the Renaissance has long been dismissed, most famously by Lucien Febvre, who insisted that early modern thinkers lacked "the conceptual tools" for such a notion.[33] In other words, belief was so ubiquitous and societally ingrained in that era that non-belief would have been literally inconceivable. Yet, as Wirth archly counters, atheism was indeed conceivable, for that was the very charge levied at individuals like ministers Anthony Englebrecht, Wolfgang Schultheiss, and

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[29] Brady, "The Social Place of a German Renaissance Artist: Hans Baldung Grien (1484/85-1545) at Strasbourg," 308.
[30] Weber am Bach, *Hans Baldung Grien (1484/85-1545): Marienbilder in der Reformation*, 67. Translation mine.
[31] Kirk M. Summers, *Morality after Calvin: Theodore Beza's Christian Censor and Reformed Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press ; Oxford Scholarship Online, 2017), 62.
[32] Jean Wirth, "'Libertins' et 'Epicuriens': Aspects de L'irréligion Au XVIe Siecle," *Bibliotheque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 39, no. 3 (1977): 622. Translation mine.
[33] Lucien Febvre, *Le Problem de l'incroyance Au XVIe Siècle: La Religion de Rabelais* (Paris, 1968), 428, quoted in Wirth, "'Libertins' et 'Epicuriens': Aspects de L'irréligion Au XVIe Siecle," 601. Translation mine.

naturalist pastor Otto Brunfels.[34] For Bucer, Epicureans' "espousal of open doctrinal inquiry and dissent" was a threat to the unity of the Church, and could only be construed as some form of heresy.[35] Given this attitude of suspicion, it remains difficult to discern the extent to which the Epicureans existed outside of Bucer's wary imagination, as a label to apply to perceived dangerous individuals. On the other hand, Weber am Bach's apt example of the *Epicedion* of Thomas Sporer provides an edifying illustration of exactly the kind of attitude that might elicit such criticism.

The *Epicedion,* which contains a woodcut of, and possibly by, Baldung himself, to whom the preface is also dedicated, reads as a remarkably pagan document, given its era.[36] As Weber am Bach relays, his eulogizers commend him not unto God, Mary, or the saints, but picture his soul ascending "to the place of Apollo and ruling over the Muses."[37] Nor was this Epicedion the product of some group of subversives –it was not only approved of, but largely composed by, Protestant chaplain Johannes Rudalphinger.[38] Despite the objections of Bucer, Weber am Bach argues, the popularity of the humanist analogy between the pluralistic Gods of classic religion and the Christian God of the Bible allowed such writings to go more or less effectively unpunished; thus was the tolerance of Strasbourg in Baldung's lifetime.[39] While Protestantism had undeniably altered the city, it did not stifle free thought to the extent that its official government assumption might imply. As Miriam Usher Chrisman observes, anticlericalism and

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[34] Brunfels is discussed at length by James H. Marrow, "Symbol and Meaning in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and the Early Renaissance," *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 16, no. 2/3 (1986): 162, 169. Schultheiss and Engelbrecht are made mention of in Summers, *Morality after Calvin: Theodore Beza's Christian Censor and Reformed Ethics*, 326.
[35] Summers, *Morality after Calvin: Theodore Beza's Christian Censor and Reformed Ethics*, 326.
[36] This portrait of Baldung is accompanied by a double-portrait of Rudalphinger himself, author of the text. Weber am Bach, *Hans Baldung Grien (1484/85-1545): Marienbilder in der Reformation*, 68.
[37] Ibid, 70. Translation mine.
[38] Ibid, 68-70.
[39] Ibid, 70.

confusion over the role of the church predated the Reformation proper by several centuries.[40] Therefore, it is not surprising that religious life in Strasbourg continued to be richly polyvocal after its inception.

Though the knowledge that the artist's home town continued to foster a variety of responses to religious questions beyond the Reformation provides welcome context here, as mentioned earlier, the works I have chosen to discuss were created relatively early in Baldung's career. In the years between 1507 and 1519, before Protestantism reached its peak and before Baldung had fully embarked on his famous exploration of witchcraft and memento mori imagery, he stuck to subjects that were fairly conventional, inasmuch as many other artists were concerned with their depiction. This ubiquity provides ample opportunity to compare Baldung's handling of then-standard religious topics –a martyrdom scene, a Man of Sorrows variant, and an image of the Fall of Man, respectively –with those of his contemporaries, and especially with Albrecht Dürer, whose compositions heavily influenced his pupil, but were rarely borrowed from without reinvention. In the absence of a written record for Baldung's beliefs, such comparisons help clarify the extent to which his art engages with shifting notions of religiosity, artistry, and the dynamic between creator and viewer.

Since insisting upon Baldung's images as conduits for ideas or doctrine is not a tenable option for those studying an artist who left behind no personal writings, a focus on the experience that they may have elicited is a potentially fruitful method of addressing historical distance. First and foremost, this approach requires an acknowledgment of one's own modern perspective. As Georges Didi-Huberman writes, in studying the art of earlier epochs, one must balance an acceptance of the impossibility of pure neutrality with as thorough an understanding

[40] Chrisman, *Strasbourg and the Reform: A Study in the Process of Change*, 34.

as is possible of history. Neither the past nor the present can take precedence in the art historian's appraisal, for they complement one another:

> "Too present and the object runs the risk of becoming nothing but the support of fantasy. Too past and it runs the risk of becoming nothing more than a mere residue…killed by its own "objectivity" (another fantasy). One should neither attempt to fix nor eliminate this distance: one should make it work in the differential tempo of moments of empathetic proximity –anachronistic and unverifiable –together with moments of critical withdrawal –scrupulous and examined."[41]

Didi-Huberman's platonic ideal of art scholarship hinges upon the negotiation of the experience of an artwork in two contexts: its only partially accessible historical milieu, and the inherently subjective vantage point of today's interpreter. To bridge this gap, my study will focus on how Baldung's compositions may have guided –or refused to guide –viewer response while attempting to remain cognizant of unattainability of an actual window into the early modern mind.

My first chapter, a discussion of the then-journeyman's first major altarpieces, which incorporate portraits and self-portraits into their religious scenes, follows from James H. Marrow's argument that early modern Northern artists were newly concerned with the "structur[ing] of [audience] experience and interpretation," and that Baldung in particular sought to craft "patterns of image-viewer reciprocity."[42] Though not all of Marrow's assertions about the psychological confrontation implicit in Baldung's figural arrangements fully convince, his insistence that the self-consciousness of his art doubles as an audience-consciousness provides a useful paradigm for unpacking its implications. To this end, Corine Schleif's notion of "dual referencing" –the tendency of artists in the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance to link the

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[41] Georges Didi-Huberman, *Devant le temps* (Paris: Minuit, 2000): 15-16. Quoted in Keith Moxey, "Impossible Distance: Past and Present in the Study of Dürer and Grünewald," *The Art Bulletin* 86, no. 4 (December 2004): 758.

[42] James H. Marrow, "Symbol and Meaning in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and the Early Renaissance," *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 16, no. 2/3 (1986): 162, 169.

contemporaneous world of real individuals to the abstract realm of faith via "pious identification" –is also of utility.[43] Baldung's bold insertion of his own likeness directly behind Saint Sebastian carries with it a host of interpretative possibilities that depend on the viewer's stand point, and ultimately de-familiarizes the sacred narrative in which it is embedded.

In keeping with this tendency towards the de-familiarization of holy topoi is his later print, *Christ Being Carried to Heaven by Angels,* which solicits two passion-related iconographic types –the gnadenstuhl and the Man of Sorrows –only to upset the pattern of frontality according to which they are typically displayed. Again following the assumption that images of the divine, and particularly of the post-crucifixion Christ, were by Baldung's day often designed to elicit particular internal states, especially compassion, this second chapter explores the affective implications of his distortion of Trinitarian imagery. I seek to evaluate and contextualize the destabilizing quality Baldung may have desired through close looking at its relationship to a related engraving by Dürer, as well as other artistic renderings of the Northern Imago Pietatis.

Finally, the third chapter investigates the visual strategies by which Baldung's 1519 *Adam and Eve,* featuring a first couple already beset by the pain of human connection and sexuality, emotionally complicates and temporally dislocates the narrative of the first disobedience. Of the many renditions of Adam and Eve that Baldung would undertake to complete, this woodcut is distinctive in that the two figures, though bound physically, are so disconnected. While sexualizing the Fall, Baldung does not provide the viewer with an uncomplicated eroticism, instead honing in on the first parents' alienation from each other. A negotiation of the conflicting ways in which this image has been recently interpreted by Koerner, Bodo Brinkmann, Lise Wajeman, and others speaks to its ambiguous valence.

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[43] Corine Schleif, "Nicodemus and Sculptors: Self-Reflexivity in Works by Adam Kraft and Tilman Riemenschneider," *The Art Bulletin* 75, no. 4 (December 1993): 599.

Far removed from each other as these early works initially appear, they resonate thematically with one another in their apparent lack of concern for symbolically or theologically justifying their reworking of iconographic material –be it via the addition of a self-likeness, the parody of Dürer, or the disruption of standard formatting –and their foregrounding of audience response. Though only part of the story, taken together, the three offer compelling evidence that whatever his motives, Hans Baldung Grien sought to engage in novel ways of relating to religious images and themes, beyond their ostensibly devotional function, through formal choices that call attention to a complex reciprocal relationship: the editorial choice of the artist on the one hand, and on the other, the interpretative powers and responsibilities of the viewer.

CHAPTER ONE: Portraiture, Self-Portraiture, and Construction of the Artistic Self and the Viewer in the *Saint Sebastian* and *Three Kings* Altarpieces

In what ways can Baldung's treatment of the religious image be understood to operate, and how did it evolve over the course of his early career? Before turning our attention to *Christ Carried to Heaven by Angels* (1517) and *Adam and Eve* (1519), which constitute more explicit instances of his reworking of iconographic material, an exploration of his first two altarpieces, sister triptychs *The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian* and the *Three Kings* retable, both dating to around 1507, is useful to this end (Fig. 1, Fig. 2). In addition to revealing to the young artist's high degree of self-confidence and inventiveness, they stand as a remarkable joint example of his steps towards formulating his own artistic vocabulary, in conversation with, rather than opposition to, that of his mentor. Here, Baldung incorporates disguised portraiture and self-portraiture into traditional religious topics in a manner comparable to, yet already distinguishable from, Dürer's treatment of similar scenes and compositional situations. In his direction of special attention towards the evocative power of gesture and formal elements such as space and color – stylistic preoccupations that would follow him throughout his career –Baldung displays a distinctive approach towards art-making. While functioning on one level as devotional objects, the retables also comprise sites of remarkable experimentation and self-invention.

The circumstances surrounding the paintings' creation remain somewhat opaque, due to what Michael Scholz describes as "sparse information," at least as regards documentary evidence, about the reign of Archbishop of Magdeburg Ernst von Wettin II of Saxony, for whom they were likely commissioned.[44] Though eventually brought to the Dominican Cathedral at

[44] Michael Scholz, *Residenz, Hof und Verwaltung der Erzbischöfe von Magdeburg in Halle in der ersten Hälfte des 16. Jahrhunderts, Göttingen Univ. Diss. 1994*, Residenzforschung, Bd. 7 (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1998), 13–14. Quoted in Sabine Söll-Tauchert, *Hans Baldung Grien (1484/85-1545) : Selbstbildnis und Selbstinszenierung*, 117, translation mine. See also Kurt Löcher, "Hans Baldung Grien:

Halle, consecrated in 1523 by Ernst's successor, Albrecht of Brandenburg, their location prior to this point is unknown.[45] According to Karl Oettinger, they were likely first created for the Mary Magdalene Chapel in the Moritzburg, a church commissioned by Ernst but that was not consecrated until after his passing.[46] As Sabine Söll-Tauchert notes, more recent studies have tended to agree with Oettinger's speculation, especially seeing as "no other church in Halle around 1507 would have come into question as a site."[47]

For the young Baldung, garnering such a prestigious assignment would have been a significant honor and boon. As Thomas A. Brady discusses, laws passed by Emperor Friedrich II in the early days of the Holy Roman Empire fused the rights and offices of clerical and lay rulers, so that bishops and archbishops also held duties as imperial princes.[48] Thus, Ernst von Wettin, as archbishop-prince, was a powerful patron in multiple senses. He could and did have his pick of artists, hiring the sought-after Peter Vischer the Elder to craft a large and extravagant tomb sculpture for himself in 1494.[49] With this in mind, his choice of Baldung for these altarpieces is remarkable, and is probably explicable by the latter's apprenticeship to a far better-established teacher. Noting Dürer's close working relationship with Ernst's brother, Elector Frederick the Wise of Wittenberg, Söll-Tauchert goes on to argue that since Baldung "surely did

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Altarpiece of Saint Sebastian," in *Gothic and Renaissance Art in Nuremberg, 1300-1550*, ed. Rainer Kahsnitz and William D. Wixom (New York ; West Germany: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and Prestel Verlag, Munich, 1986), 372.

[45] Löcher, "Hans Baldung Grien: Altarpiece of Saint Sebastian," 372–74.

[46] Oettinger and Knappe, *Hans Baldung Grien und Albrecht Dürer in Nürnberg*, 119–20. Quoted in Söll-Tauchert, *Hans Baldung Grien (1484/85-1545) : Selbstbildnis und Selbstinszenierung*, 115.

[47] Söll-Tauchert, *Hans Baldung Grien (1484/85-1545) : Selbstbildnis und Selbstinszenierung*, 115.

[48] Thomas A. Brady, "One Soul, Two Bodies: Lordship and Faith in the Prince-Bishopric of Würzburg c. 1500," in *Tilman Riemenschneider, c. 1460-1531*, ed. Julien Chapuis (Washington: National Gallery of Art; Distributed by Yale University Press, 2004), 16.

[49] The tomb purportedly cost upwards of 1500 guilders. Sven Hauschke, "Die Grablege von Erzbischof Ernst von Wettin im Magdeburger Dom. Baupolitik im Zeichen der Memoria," in *Kontinuität und Zäsur: Ernst von Wettin und Albrecht von Brandenburg*, ed. Andrea Tacke (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2005), 238. Söll-Tauchert, *Hans Baldung Grien (1484/85-1545) : Selbstbildnis und Selbstinszenierung*, 147. For more details on this artwork and its program, see Simon Meller, *Peter Vischer der Ältere und Seine Werkstatt*, ed. Karl Scheffler and Curt Glaser (Leipzig: Insel-Verlag, 1925), 44–55.

not yet enjoy a wide-reaching reputation, it is obvious that the patron must have first turned to the famous Nuremberg master, Dürer."[50] Since Dürer was travelling through Italy at the time of this important commission, it is likely that he recommended his star pupil to carry it out in his stead.[51]

The von Wettin altarpieces' saintly programs provided ample opportunity for the journeyman to flex the skills he had been honing in Dürer's workshop, and offer us further evidence towards Ernst as a donor. Identical in dimensions, the triptychs follow the same format: two static saints in the side panels, and a more narrative –although still poised and presentational –scene in the wider central panel. On the left, the *Three Kings* altarpiece shows an armored Saint George with dragon underfoot, and at right, fellow soldier-Saint Maurice, patron of von Wettin's archbishopric and residence, whom as Paul H. D. Kaplan notes was "enjoying renewed popularity in Germany at this time."[52] In between the saints are Mary and baby Jesus, whose seat in his mothers' lap implies her status as the Throne of Jesus or Seat of Wisdom, and Joseph, spatially constrained to the extreme right of the frame.[53] The Magi are differentiated on the basis of age and race, corresponding to the contemporaneous notion of the Magi as representatives of

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[50] For more on Dürer's relationship with Frederick the Wise, see Larry Silver, "Chapter 8: Civic Courtship: Albrecht Dürer, the Saxon Duke, and the Emperor," in *The Essential Dürer*, ed. Larry Silver and Jeffrey Chipps Smith (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press ; Proquest Ebook Central, 2010), 131, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu. Söll-Tauchert, *Hans Baldung Grien (1484/85-1545) : Selbstbildnis und Selbstinszenierung*, 123.

[51] Regarding this trip and its reception by Vasari and others, see Katherine Crawford Luber, "Chapter 4: Dürer as Painter," in *The Essential Dürer,* ed. Larry Silver and Jeffrey Chipps Smith (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press ; Proquest Ebook Central, 2010), 62–73, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu.

[52] Söll-Tauchert, *Hans Baldung Grien (1484/85-1545) : Selbstbildnis und Selbstinszenierung* 122. Though, initially met with disapproval by the Magdeburg Cathedral chapter, the Mary Magdalene Chapel was not completed in Ernst's lifetime, at his request, his heart was interred there after his death in 1513. See ibid, 119; Paul H.D. Kaplan, *The Rise of the Black Magus in Western Art* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985), 119.

[53] Mary as the throne of mercy is discussed in Manuela Beer and Moritz Woelk, "Introduction," in *The Magi : Legend, Art and Cult : Catalogue Published for the Exhibition at the Museum Schnütgen, Cologne, 25 October 2014 - 25 January 2015*, ed. Jane Michael, Manuela Beer, and Moritz Woelk (Munich: Hirmer Verlag, 2014), 15.

three ages of man and what early modern Westerners thought of as the three domains of the world –Europe, Africa and Asia.[54]

The *Saint Sebastian* triptych, meanwhile, depicts tonsured, dalmatic-clad Saint Stephen at left, and Saint Christopher with birch staff and Christ-child at right.[55] Like the adoration altarpiece, it is as much of a map of familial and political ties as it is a spiritual document. As Söll-Tauchert points out, Stephen was the patron saint of the Diocese of Halberstadt, who oversaw Ernst von Wettin in his position as archbishop.[56] Meanwhile, Sebastian, as well as presiding as one of "electoral-Ernestine house saints," would have held additional appeal for the syphilis-stricken donor in his function as plague saint.[57] Tied to a tree by a single loop of rope, the slender saint leans back as though in repose. Piercing his thigh is a lone arrow from the brightly garmented group of archers, whose other endeavors have failed. Behind him stands a green-clad figure whose eyes meet the viewer's.

Besides their size, the stylistic commonalities between the altarpieces for von Wettin are plain, providing a general impression of Baldung's concerns at the time of their creation. As

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[54] Dawson W. Carr, *Andrea Mantegna : The Adoration of the Magi* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 1997), 63, http://d2aohiyo3d3idm.cloudfront.net/publications/virtuallibrary/0892362871.pdf. This concept dates back at least to early medieval religious text *Collectanea*, from which the names Caspar, Balthazar, and Melchior, by which they are often known, are derived. As Paul H. D. Kaplan observes in note 17, p.231, of his book on *The Rise of the Black Magus in Western Art,* unless the names of the Magi are specifically indicated in a given artwork, it is not a given that they can be identified by name on the basis of their age or race. Instead, while the association of each Wise Man with a distinct stage of life or global origin became a common pattern in the Middle Ages, actual naming conventions remained fluid into the early modern era. See also Kaplan, *The Rise of the Black Magus in Western Art,* 94. For this reason, I have decided not to refer to the Magi in this altarpiece by specific name. Vezin notes that the naming of the mages derives also from slightly later Irish manuscripts. See Gilberte Vezin, *L'adoration et Le Cycle Des Mages Dans l'art Chrétien Primitif* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1950), 53.

[55] Though not discussed here, the outer wings depict Saints Apollonia and Dorothea. See Werner Zimmermann, "Gemälde," in *Hans Baldung Grien: Ausstellung unter dem Protektorat des I. C. O. M. 4. Juli-27. September 1959,* ed. Edith Amman, Ernst Brochhagen, Jan Lauts, Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe, Luise Vernickel, Ingeburg Vorbrodt, Friedrich Wielandt, Eva Zimmermann, and Werner Zimmermann (Karlsruhe: C.F. Müller, 1959), 39.

[56] Söll-Tauchert, *Hans Baldung Grien (1484/85-1545) : Selbstbildnis und Selbstinszenierung*, 122.

[57] Ibid. Translation mine.

Söll-Tauchert puts it, in an assessment of the treatment of space in the Sebastian retable that applies well to both works, the arrangement of figures conveys a notably "theatrical effect," with figures presented as though "upon a narrow stage."[58] With landscape information vertically stacked on shallow spatial planes that read more as backdrops than backgrounds and holy personages arranged like tableau vivant players, both altarpieces eschew naturalism in favor of an idealized, expressive, and, some have argued, self-consciously artificial artistic mode.[59]

In his analysis of Baldung's slightly later woodcut of *The Holy Family with Saint Anne and Joachim,* James Marrow asserts that a high degree of self- and audience-consciousness is intrinsic to the artist's approach overall (Fig. 3); though the image is "ostensibly conventional," the figures' "formal poses," potentially "uneas[y]" or uncomfortable expressions, and their "look[s] outward" towards the viewer "call…attention to the inherent artifice of the situation of…representation."[60] Frustrated by what he perceives to be an over-reliance on the Panofskian notion of hidden symbolism, with its focus on iconographic identification rather than how art communicates to "structur[e] experience and interpretation," Marrow attempts a reading of the psychological state that Baldung's compositions might induce.[61] Though his conclusions, like those of Joseph Koerner in *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance,* arguably run the risk of anachronism in their application of a modern, subjective lens to the past, his

[58] Ibid*,* 157. Translation mine.
[59] Ibid, 157.
[60] Marrow, "Symbol and Meaning in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and the Early Renaissance," 166.
[61] Ibid, 152. Marrow notes this phrases' debt to Joseph Leo Koerner, who at this point had not published his *Moment of Self-Portraiture,* but instead "The mortification of the image: Death as a hermeneutic in Hans Baldung Grien," *Representations* 10 (1985), pp. 52-101.

stylistic and tonal observations, echoed in more recent scholarship like that of Söll-Tauchert, are relevant here. [62]

The stiff postures of Baldung's von Wettin altarpiece figures and their confused relationship to the space they inhabit are striking enough to lend some credence to Marrow's analysis of his artwork as intentionally unreal-looking. This is especially apparent when they are viewed in dialogue with the work of his mentor, Albrecht Dürer. Such a comparison is easier to make in the case of the Adoration retable, several compositional features of which reference Dürer's *Adoration of the Magi* of only three years earlier, crafted for Ernst von Wettin's brother, Elector Frederick the Wise (Fig. 4).[63] Whereas in Larry Silver's estimation, Dürer takes the divine subject matter as an opportunity to experiment with "Italian pictorial conventions, such as perspective and complex architecture" and to reflect the nuances of "the natural world," Baldung's approach to setting indicates a relative disinterest in the organic.[64] While Dürer takes pains to render a cohesive spatial schema for his biblical personae, Baldung's barely interact with their surroundings. For instance, while Dürer's mother and child, though similarly dressed to those of his pupil and positioned in the same throne-like configuration, rest securely on a stone step with Mary's back propped against the stable wall, Baldung's are seemingly perched on the ground, the object that supports their pose hidden or nonexistent.

Although Baldung's Saint Sebastian altarpiece bears less resemblance to any known artwork of Dürer's than does his Adoration triptych to the 1504 treatment of the same subject, it

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[62] For an insightful exploration of historical distance as it applies to early modern German art and weighing the merits of Koerner's approach in comparison to other recent scholars, see Moxey, "Impossible Distance: Past and Present in the Study of Dürer and Grünewald." Discussion of Koerner's approach to Baldung begins on page 760, while earlier pages discuss historical distance in relation to German identity and art criticism before and after the second world war. The recent "echo" I perceived lies in Söll-, *Hans Baldung Grien (1484/85-1545) : Selbstbildnis und Selbstinszenierung*, 157. quoted above, where she discusses the "theatralische" treatment of space, for example.

[63] Söll-Tauchert, *Hans Baldung Grien (1484/85-1545) : Selbstbildnis und Selbstinszenierung*, Ibid, 123.

[64] Silver, "Chapter 8: Civic Courtship: Albrecht Dürer, the Saxon Duke, and the Emperor," 133.

shares with the other von Wettin altarpiece a stage-like arrangement of human bodies, at odds with the studied naturalism of much of Dürer's output in this era. Moreover, whereas Dürer's Sebastians, such as his contrapposto engraved rendition from around 1500, tend to be isolated at the column, as was typical in depictions of his martyrdom, a conspicuous figure in green all but looms over Baldung's saint (Fig. 5).[65] Like the central king in the Adoration scene, this man stares straight out at the viewer. Marrow brings forth this pronounced gaze, seen often in Baldung's art, as evidence of the artists' self-consciousness in his *Holy Family* print and general oeuvre.[66] In the 1507 triptychs, this focus on the representation of the process of looking and the attention it draws to key players have led scholars to investigate both altarpieces for their portraiture content.

To this end, the Adoration panel is once again easier to parse. Gert von der Osten's assertion that the painting's middle king is intended as a *portrait historié* of Archbishop Ernst von Wettin of Madgeburg in the guise of a wise man has been generally accepted.[67] As observed more recently by Markus Leo Mock, the black and gold brocade this central figure wears, coupled with his crancelin-like green headpiece, reference the shield of the Duchy of Saxony.[68] Though Mock also suspects that the kneeling older king could comprise a likeness of the archbishop's father, the first Ernst von Wettin, Baldung concentrates more strongly on the

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[65] Söll-Tauchert, *Hans Baldung Grien (1484/85-1545) : Selbstbildnis und Selbstinszenierung*,143.
[66] Marrow, "Symbol and Meaning in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and the Early Renaissance," 166.
[67] von der Osten, *Hans Baldung Grien: Gemälde und Dokumente,* 42-47; Jörg Rogge, "Zum Amts- und Herrschafsverständnis von Geistlichen Fürsten am Beispiel der Magdeburger Erzbischöfe Ernst von Wettin Und Albrecht von Brandenburg (1480 bis 1540)," in *Kontinuität und Zäsur: Ernst von Wettin und Albrecht von Brandenburg*, ed. Andreas Tacke (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2005), 63; Markus Leo Mock, *Kunst Unter Erzbischof Ernst von Magdeburg* (Berlin: Berlin Technical University Dissertation (2005), 2007), 235, 241. qtd in Söll-Tauchert, *Hans Baldung Grien (1484/85-1545) : Selbstbildnis und Selbstinszenierung*, 123-124, note 147.
[68] Mock, *Kunst unter Erzbischof Ernst von Magdeburg,* 235, 241, qtd in Söll-Tauchert, *Hans Baldung Grien (1484/85-1545): Selbstbildnis und Selbstinszenierung*, 123-124, note 147.

middle magus, attending especially to the indents of his visage.[69] The slight furrow in his brow, his nasolabial folds, the hollows around his eyes, the cleft in his chin, all cohere to lend him a particularity of character, while his outsized fingers, clenched tight around the stem of his goblet, recall the Classical notion of "the hand as the corporeal site of agency for Aristotle, Galen, and their followers."[70]

As Friederich Polleross, drawing on the ideas of Martin Warnke, observes, a key "characteristic" of the *portrait historié* is its "oscillation between a humble emulation of virtue on the one hand and either a pretentious conception of rulership or flattery on the other."[71] The political dimensions of Magi representations date at least to the 11th century reign of Emperor Otto I, when the Anglo-Saxon Benedictional of St. Athewold was crafted, containing some of the earliest visual interpretations of the Wise Men as kings.[72] In their survey of Magi imagery in and around Cologne, Beer et. al attribute this shift in iconography –the wise men were previously portrayed as "heathen astrologers" –to the Ottonian notion that their line of emperors had "received their crown and their power directly from Christ, the King of Kings, and acted as his representative."[73] With this perception of leadership as God-given in mind, it is perhaps besides the point to attempt to clarify where on the spectrum between "humility" and "pretention" Ernst's identification portrait falls, except to note that such a bold secular typology could not

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[69] Mock, *Kunst unter Erzbischof Ernst von Magdeburg,* 236-238, qtd in Söll-Tauchert, *Selbstbildnis und Selbstinszenierung*, 123-124, note 147.
[70] Peter Stallybrass and Ann Rosalind Jones, "Fetishizing the Glove in Renaissance Europe," *Critical Inquiry* 28, no. 1 (Autumn 2001): 119.
[71] Friedrich Polleross, "Between Typology and Psychology: The Role of the Identification Portrait in Updating Old Testament Representations," *Artibus et Historiae* 12, no. 24 (1991): 82, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1483416.
[72] Although such ideas had been underway theologically for longer than this, the Magi were rarely, if at all, shown as kings before then. Beer and Woelk, "Introduction," 15.
[73] Ibid, 15.

exist without the motivation of both, and such a conception of kingship as divine, or at least divine-adjacent. [74]

Equally as intriguing as von Wettin's portrait-as-magus, and moreover a good deal more surprising, given the artist's relatively unknown status, is the probable likeness of Baldung himself as the figure just behind Sebastian in the martyrdom panel. Similar qualities to those that make Ernst stand out mark this man as important; his stare, sharply detailed facial features, and vibrant vestments render the saint next to him a touch bloodless by comparison. Disguised self-portraits within religious scenes, like portraits of patrons in the guise of religious figures, were growing more and more complex and varied at this moment. In large part, this was thanks to Dürer, to whom scholars have "been able to identify no less than ten painted and drawn self-portraits, nine "hidden" self-portraits and four self-portraits in the background of paintings, all before 1510."[75] Though novel in itself for such a barely established artist, especially because self-portraits within a Saint Sebastian scene are themselves exceedingly rare, Söll-Tauchert writes that what is further unusual about this self-representation resides in its its prominence, assurance, and ambiguous valence.[76] The role of the green-draped figure is not immediately evident. His lively expression contrasting with that of the near-nude Sebastian, who appears so indifferent to his plight that Kurt Löcher describes the altarpiece as entirely "without emotion,"

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[74] Although it is worth noting that, according to von der Osten, it may also include a second portrait of Ernst himself as a pensive noble amongst the archers, whose clothing and physiognomy bear marked resemblance to his likeness in the Adoration altarpiece. Von der Osten, *Hans Baldung Grien: Gemälde und Dokumente,* cited in Löcher, "Hans Baldung Grien: Altarpiece of Saint Sebastian," 372.

[75] Thomas Eser, "Dürer's Self-Portraits and Self-Documentation (cats. *1-6*)," in *The Early Dürer,* ed. Thomas Eser and Daniel Hess (New York: Thames & Hudson, in association with Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, 2012), 261. Some of these identifications have been disputed, often due to questions of autonomy. See Stephanie Porras, ""ein freie hant:" Autonomy, Drawing, and the Young Dürer," in *The Early Dürer,* ed. Thomas Eser and Daniel Hess (New York: Thames & Hudson, in association with Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, 2012), 243-259.

[76] Söll Tauchert, *Hans Baldung Grien (1484/85-1545): Selbstbildnis und Selbstinszenierung,* 149, 143, 147.

he is neither active participant nor pious worshipper, looking directly out from the painting as though trying to communicate with the beholder, yet offering only obscure clues as to his identity.[77]

This enigmatic self-presentation marks a departure from the modes self-portraiture typical to Dürer, at least to the extent that generalizations can be made about the vast body of likenesses, both "hidden" and overt, that the Nuremberg artist constructed of himself over the course of his career. In images like his 1506 *Feast of the Rosary,* Dürer adopts an intermediary role that must have influenced that of his student here (Fig. 6).[78] In a format that Koerner connects to the *in assistenza* tradition, he sets himself compositionally apart from the religious scene, dressed fashionably and making frank eye contact with the viewer.[79] What distinguishes Dürer's self-portraits *in assistenza* from those of his contemporaries, like Luca Signorelli and the Master of Frankfurt, whose *Preaching of the Antichrist* and *Festival of the Archers* feature similar self-portrayals, is his addition of an inscription (Fig. 7, 8).[80] Not content to leave his identity implicit, his painted stand-in holds a paper listing not only his name and country of origin, but even specifying the short duration the work took to complete, thus testifying to his own speed and facility in the medium.[81]

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[77] Löcher, "Hans Baldung Grien: Altarpiece of Saint Sebastian," 372.
[78] Baldung would not have seen this painting in person, but may have been aware of its contents via preliminary work, oral sources, or thanks to its literary reception. Söll-Tauchert, *Hans Baldung Grien (1484/85-1545) : Selbstbildnis und Selbstinszenierung* 165.
[79] Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture,* 112.
[80] Signorelli's work is entioned in both Söll-Tauchert, *Hans Baldung Grien (1484/85-1545) : Selbstbildnis und Selbstinszenierung*, 148, and Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art*, 470, note 102. My mention of the Master of Frankfurt's self-portrait also owes itself to Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art*, 470, note 102.
[81] As Söll-Tauchert sees it, Dürer's dual verbal and visual self-assertion was intended to assert his ability to prove himself as more than a graphic artist, capable of equaling and, for that matter, rivaling his Venetian colleagues. Söll-Tauchert, *Hans Baldung Grien (1484/85-1545) : Selbstbildnis und Selbstinszenierung*, 164.

Perhaps because Baldung needed to remain anonymous for a self-portrait to be allowed, he goes without a written identifier.[82] If his green moiré robe refers to his nickname, only those in the know would guess as much.[83] Moreover, as Koerner describes it, his "centrality" to the work, where he stands a head above Sebastian, rendering the saint a mere "advertisement of [Baldung's own] talent," precludes a grouping together of his self-representation with that of Signorelli or the Master of Frankfurt, despite their common lack of writing.[84] The latter two comprise notable components of a varied and cohesive scheme, while Baldung takes visual precedence over the holy figure who is supposed to be the panel's star.[85] Though he does not go so far as to present himself as an actual actor in the scene –that honor he reserves for his patron – neither is his presence entirely passive. With his insistent gaze and assertive open-palmed gesture, he can be said to diminish or usurp some of the panel's reverential mood, which one might expect to be the purpose of a typical altarpiece.

For this reason, Koerner dubs his role in the painting "disturb[ing]," at least to contemporary historians, for its implicit valuation of the artist himself over the holy subject matter depicted.[86] Baldung's self-assurance marks a puzzling permutation of the emerging artistic tendency of "dual referencing" that Corine Schleif identifies in her writing on integrated portraits and self-portraits in the medieval and early Renaissance era.[87] Although, as Schleif

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[82] Söll-Tauchert, *Hans Baldung Grien (1484/85-1545) : Selbstbildnis und Selbstinszenierung*, 147.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art*, 425.
[85] While Söll-Tauchert sees Sebastian's features as somewhat blurred in comparison to Baldung's, I would not go so far myself. In my opinion, Sebastian's features are far from generic, and his quasi-conspiratorial inclination of the head towards Baldung's likeness makes one wonder whether he was meant to represent another real individual, perhaps a friend of the artist. I am grateful to Dr. Mary Pardo for this observation. See Söll-Tauchert, *Hans Baldung Grien (1484/85-1545) : Selbstbildnis und Selbstinszenierung,* 141.
[86] Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art*, 425.
[87] Corine Schleif, "Nicodemus and Sculptors: Self-Reflexivity in Works by Adam Kraft and Tilman Riemenschneider," *The Art Bulletin* 75, no. 4 (December 1993): 599–626. See also Corine Schleif,

notes, "[i]mages of contemporary persons are ubiquitous in virtually all media and genre of sacred art in the Middle Ages," they typically serve to "establish divinizing 'likeness.'"[88] In commissioning a portrait of himself as magus, Ernst von Wettin drew an analogy between his own piety and political authority and that of one of the Biblical wise men, who enjoyed, as a group, a healthy following in the early modern period.[89] While still himself and inhabiting a "generic type" rather than the guise of a "holy precursor," Dürer, in occupying two spaces at once –painter in real life of the *Feast of the Rosary* yet fixed in perpetuity as an "interlocutor or narrator" within its frame –engages in another form of double referencing.[90] With his god-Given artistic insight, it is *as though* he bears witness to the scene –a bounty he grants to the observer, too.

Though Baldung's presentation of himself, a then-modern person, in a supposedly otherwise historical tableau is a comparable analogizing, the predominance of his figure in the composition is legible today as overwhelming the work's devotional content, so that the secular reference subsumes the divine. However, we cannot assume that what modern scholars have observed about the panel –namely, the confident, borderline cheeky self-presentation's focality – would have been held the same valence for its original viewers. Those attending the altarpiece

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"Hands That Appoint, Anoint, and Ally: Late Medieval Donor Strategies for Appropriating Approbation Through Painting," *Art History* 16, no. 1 (2002 Online 1993): 1–32.

[88] First quote is fromSchleif, "Hands That Appoint, Anoint, and Ally: Late Medieval Donor Strategies for Appropriating Approbation Through Painting," 1; second from Schleif, "Nicodemus and Sculptors: Self-Reflexivity in Worksby Adam Kraft and Tilman Riemenscheider," 624.

[89] For an interesting Florentian case study, see Rab Hatfield, "The Compagnia De' Magi," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 33 (1970): 107–61, https://doi.org/10.2307/750893. For more on confraternities in Strasbourg –of which little documentary evidence remains –see Sabine von Heusinger, "The Topography of Sacred Space and the Representation of Social Groups: Confraternities in Strasbourg," in *Politics and Reformations - Communities, Polities, Nations, and Empires : Essays in Honor of Thomas A. Brady, Jr.*, ed. Christopher Ocker et al. (Leiden ; Boston: Brill ; ProQuest Ebook Central, 2007), 67–83.

[90] Schleif, "Nicodemus and Sculptors: Self-Reflexivity in Worksby Adam Kraft and Tilman Riemenscheider," 623.

would not have been likely to know the emerging artist, or pick up on his potential nod towards his nickname.[91] If they noticed the intensity of the man in green –it is hard to imagine that they could miss it –how would they incorporate it into the meaning of the altarpiece as a whole? Again, the question of audience response seems critical here, but, as Marrow notes, is impossible to replicate. While early modern "textual evidence" can point to potential motivations for "artistic change," besides select, famous pieces that were written about by contemporary observers, what viewers made of artworks like Baldung's in their seminal contexts will presumably continue to be largely unknown.[92]

Although it seems both presumptuous and anachronistic to claim that Baldung's self-portrait behind Sebastian was meant to serve as a joke or boast to its immediate viewers, it is not, on the other hand, impossible that he was so assured of his eventual fame that he supposed it would some day be an item for discussion. Though we can never have complete certainty as to what effect in particular Baldung intended on his viewer, the conspicuity of his green-dressed man, even if likely unidentifiable to his main audience, supports Marrow's argument that Baldung and artists like him were interested in –or even made "new demands" upon –the "consciousness of [their] beholders."[93] Marrow links this concept to a theological and philosophical tendency towards the attempted inducing of certain effects –most famously, compassion –through meditational devotional tracts, like those of Ludolph of Saxony to give a famous example, that devout artists were keen to render in visual form.[94] As Peter Parshall, linking Passion iconography to a rekindled interest in the ancient *ars memorativa*, establishes, affective piety dealt not only with feelings, but with cognition and inner experience more

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[91] Söll-Tauchert, *Hans Baldung Grien (1484/85-1545) : Selbstbildnis und Selbstinszenierung*, 147.
[92] Marrow, "Symbol and Meaning in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and the Early Renaissance," 169.
[93] Ibid, 169.
[94] Ibid, 156. More discussion of affective piety to come in chapter two.

broadly, with images such as the Man of Sorrows intended to keep the memory of Christ alive in the minds of his followers.[95]

While neither of the von Wettin altarpieces deal in Passion imagery, this new understanding of how images could communicate on a emotional and psychological level, which will be further discussed in the subsequent chapter, links them to the two other works explored in this text, from which they are otherwise very different in both content and form. Instead of a New Testament scene like the Adoration, *Christ Carried to Heaven by Angels* takes as its essential subject matter the sacrificial body of Jesus and its relationship to the Trinity, while Baldung's 1519 *Adam and Eve* addresses the incipience of sinful human nature that would eventually necessitate such a reparation. Moreover, the potentially destabilizing element Baldung introduces into the von Wettin retables –namely, the insertion of his own daringly assertive likeness, with its frank regard and open-palmed, even theatrical gesture –is far removed from the more iconographically-focused revisions evident in the two later works, whose deviations from the standard depictions of their subject matter are also more pronounced.[96] Thus, it is clear that the manner in which Baldung retools the biblical scenes of these early retables and his more radical complications of religious topoi in *Christ Carried to Heaven by Angles* and *Adam and Eve* are not one and the same. Nevertheless, in their solicitation of an involvement with the viewer in an interpretative interaction whose intention and rules are not clear, the von Wettin retables are key to out understanding of Baldung's more direct subsequent ventures into the world of iconographic reinvention.

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[95] Peter Parshall, "The Art of Memory and the Passion," *The Art Bulletin* 81, no. 3 (September 1999): 464–65.

[96] This observation is owed Baldung's hand placement as conveying a director-like concern with presentation. Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art,* 425.

CHAPTER TWO: *Christ Carried to Heaven By Angels*: Baldung's Synthesis and Transformation of the Gnadenstuhl and Man of Sorrows Types

At once provocative and grim, Hans Baldung Grien's *Christ Carried to Heaven by Angels* is virtually unprecedented, both on an aesthetic level and, perhaps more so, in the religious message –or lack thereof –that it can be understood to convey (Fig. 9). Crafted circa 1515-17, this standalone woodcut depicts the savior hauled feet-upwards like a battlefield corpse by a sullen team of putti towards a distant, abstracted Father and Holy Ghost. Through his re-contextualization of the Imago Pietatis and Gnadenstuhl motifs, Baldung invokes their original meditative function only in order to thwart it. In place of this takes shape a vision of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit alienated from each other, centering on a corpse-like Christ in no way prepared to take his place at the right hand of God. These fractured Trinitarian elements exist within a deliberately unbalanced composition, resulting in an image that refuses to disclose its meaning. By thus presenting a distorted mirror to established iconographic types, Baldung sets up a singular niche in the artistic milieu of his epoch.

Before exploring how this print can be understood as the product of its time, such an original work needs must be met on its own terms**.** As the given title suggests, the woodcut shows a cluster of putti lifting Christ skywards. Set against a horseshoe-shaped bed of clouds, they form a complex configuration that takes up roughly half of the composition. Rather than merely "carrying" Christ, the angels drag him, their expressively executed bodies straining under his weight. Although another cherub, bearing a crown of thorns, floats nearby, four putti in particular do the heavy lifting, pieces of shroud bunched in their fists.[97] One cradles Christ's listless right arm by the elbow. Another's failure to support Jesus's neck allows his head to loll

[97] For more on early modern angelology and angels in popular piety, see Marjorie Harrington, "Magi and Angels: Charms in Plimpton Add. MS 02," *Journal of the Early Book Society for the Study of Manuscripts and Printing* 16 (January 2013): 1–26.

straight down. To the left of this, a third grabs the savior's haunches, his furrowed brow and twisted mouth revealing his effort. At far left, a final putto takes both feet, stretching Christ's legs up and outwards, far above the height of his head.

I dwell in a detailed description of this formation because, as the print's immediate focus, it establishes its initial tone. Baldung attends closely to the expressions and attitudes of the putti in order to exaggerate Christ's limpness to the greatest possible extent. Here is a Jesus barely, if at all, graced and animated by the spark of holy life. His wounds are swollen, his limbs set at odd angles and suffused with a heaviness the putti toil to combat. Baldung renders this broken body in loose patterns of shading that grow more complex in areas of physical damage. Note, for instance, the way the shadows on Christ's right thigh curves queasily in towards the left, suggesting not so much rippling musculature as slackened, puckering skin. This is not to categorize Baldung's Christ as emaciated or leprous –compared to, say, Grünewald's, he is downright healthy and muscular, too –but merely to point out the pains the artist takes to reveal the harm that the Passion has carried out on Christ's body. In his pathetic vulnerability, the Son of God looks far more human than divine.

The transcendent is evoked, rather, in person of the robed and bearded Father, who perches with arms outstretched near the composition's upper edge. Though the lines that radiate from him in concentric circles –one of short, rough segments that form a halo, another in which his body is inscribed, and then a circle of long lines extending all the way to the clouds –draw the eye, he is not situated centrally. Instead, he institutes a vertical axis in the print's leftmost third, occupying such an extreme position of distance that his features are suggested in the simplest of visual terms: two black specks for eyes, a line for a nose, his mouth lost in tufts of facial hair. While some of this simplification may be down to the print's cutter, rather than Baldung's own

design, a stylistic comparison with the artist's other pen and ink drawings, such as his circa 1507 *Death with an Inverted Banner* or his 1513 *Crucifixion*, which display similar dynamic abstractions of the human figure, suggests that God's rough face here is a deliberate effect (Fig. 11, Fig. 12). Magnified by the artist, even more so than those of the central magus at of the von Wettin adoration, his hands loom as large as his face, calling further attention to his gesture.

Beneath God hangs a wide-winged bird, its face likewise just implied. Though presumably the Holy Dove, it only distinguishable as such by context, presented without the characteristic up-pointing arc by which it can often be recognized in art from around this time. Compare, for instance, Dürer's 1511 *Holy Trinity,* which I discuss in more detail shortly (Fig. 10). Under this, along the same axis, a gap in the Father's radiant lines forms a spotlight-shaped space filled by a cascading flood of putti. Those closest to the Father are mere dots; a level further out, circles; another level, circles with crude limbs; and finally, a few emerge with recognizable arms and legs. Clad in a billowing robe –all the others are naked –a putto near the end of this stream flings his arms wide. Below him, capping off the torrent, a final angel rests on the lip of the cloud, acting as visual lien between the starkly delineated back- and foregrounds. His arms, too, are raised upwards, his face distorted.

The environment in which these figures are installed serves to enhance the disconnect between, to use Saussure's terms, the holy signifiers and what they seem to signify.[98] Edifying here is a further comparison with Dürer's *Holy Trinity,* which, with its clear-cut axial organization, buoyant cloud shapes, striking light rays, and grieving angels, is almost certain as

[98] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Cours de Linguistique Générale*, ed. Tullio De Mauro (Paris: Payot, 1976). While Marrow cautions against a semiotic reading of images, fearing that this will lead to a reduction of the role of the artist to mere interpreter of obscure theological precepts, I argue that the ubiquity of motifs such as the gnadenstuhl –discussed shortly –renders a focus on iconography fundamental to an understanding of this print's possible reception. See Marrow, "Symbol and Meaning in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and the Early Renaissance," 150.

an inspiration for Baldung Grien's later print. Dürer integrates his divine figures seamlessly into their heavenly landscape. The clouds part beneath Jesus's feet, forming a small valley of negative space that highlights their arches. Though the Father and Holy Spirit radiate lines of light, these are finer and more mathematically arranged than those Baldung uses, whose jumps and areas of overlap imply a kind of frantic energy. Dürer's light beams emanate neatly and precisely from around the Father's head and beneath the Holy Dove, where they make a smooth, gradual U. Each of these rays, though part of the background, can be traced through the print's assortment of heavenly courtiers, knitting together like threads that create a fabric strong enough to support Jesus, and, through him, the believer. Thereby, these non-figural elements work to stabilize the Trinity and fix their place in the cosmos.

Despite Baldung's comparably noteworthy lines of light and the marked similarity of his airy, flouncing clouds to those drawn by his mentor, their environmental schemes differ greatly in both structure and scope. Dürer's clouds appear only at the bottom third of his print, emerging mainly as a formal device to balance the overall composition, and to bolster the disembodied putto heads that blow wind in four directions. In Baldung's print, clouds fill the frame, covering all but the upper left-most corner. Their upturning shape produces an irregular semi-circle in which God, his radiance, and his host of putti are inscribed. It is not a series of distinct clouds but an endless, dense cloud blockade that threatens to block out God's light, posited here as equivalent to the sun.

To outline these clouds, Baldung chooses dark, somewhat coarse strokes, which tumble successively into odd ripples and bends, reminiscent of muscles or ribbons. Though orderly insofar as that rather than jarring with one another, they flow together from curve to curve, their collective effect is one of disarray. God's rays, meanwhile, are subtly uneven in spacing and

length, and circumscribed by the clouds. This dual abstraction and limitation of God's illumination contradicts the prevailing early modern belief in what Ursula Szulakowska calls the "divinity and generative power of light," as evinced in the writings of Witelo and others.[99] In *Christ Carried,* the Father's light, though powerful, cannot penetrate the fortress of clouds that bounds him.

Knowing what we now do about the religious changes that were to come, it is tempting to somehow link the undignified Jesus of *Christ Carried* to the ideas of the as-yet extremely nascent Protestant movement. Linda Hults, though acknowledging the impossibility of confirming her suspicions, writes that the print "might have provided devotional experiences reflecting Lutheran ideas."[100] While I favor Sibylle Weber am Bach's assertion that, despite Baldung's "official" association with Protestantism, the city's religious diversity and tolerance afforded "the intellectual niches" sufficient for him to focus more on secular humanism than a Reformation agenda, Hults's argument is not wildly anachronistic.[101] In the 1510s, Strasbourg was a city on the brink of a transition that involved a major re-evaluation of the role of the religious image.

Since the 13th century, Strasbourg's governance had been shifting from ecclesiastical to municipal authority.[102] This prolonged transfer of power was hastened by the Treaty of Spires in 1422, after which church chapters caved more readily to Magistrat-imposed taxes in exchange

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[99] Urszula Szulakowska, *The Alchemy of Light : Geometry and Optics in Late Renaissance Alchemical Illustration* (Boston ; Leiden: Brill, 2000), xi.
[100] Linda C. Hults, "Baldung and the Reformation," in *Hans Baldung Grien: Prints and Drawings*, ed. Alan Shestack and James H. Marrow (New Haven: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 50.
[101] Sibylle Weber am Bach, *Hans Baldung Grien (1484/85-1545): Marienbilder in der Reformation*, ed. Frank Büttner and Hans Ramisch (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2006), 70. Translation mine.
[102] Miriam Usher Chrisman, *Strasbourg and the Reform: A Study in the Process of Change* (New Haven ; London: Yale University Press, 1967), 34.

for city protection.[103] Baldung himself would eventually take part in the administration of his city, acting as a lay assessor from 1533 onwards, and serving a brief stint as town councilor before his 1545 death.[104] Of course, his office-holding status was quite a ways off in 1515-17. So too was the Reformation itself, and even when it began in earnest, its effects in Strasbourg were, though swift, not instantaneous. With this in mind, it is nonetheless also true that tensions between church and state were fast becoming subjects of interest to the city's humanist circle. Their discussions, circulating via the still-fresh medium of print, trended already towards what Miriam Usher Chrisman, noting not only intellectual dissent but "the layman's deep mistrust of clerical authority," identifies as a mounting discomfort with social inequality, concern for education, and desire for reform that would eventually coalesce into a Protestant line of thought.[105] This can be seen reflected in the works of intellectuals such as Sebastian Brant[106] and Jakob Wimpfeling.[107]

Thus, although the image phobia and destructive iconoclasm associated with the Protestant movement was yet to hit Strasbourg (and when it did, was efficiently curtailed by the Rat), the stirrings of serious doubt over the utility of devotional art were nevertheless under way.[108] While Baldung himself appears to have never engaged in formal discourse on the

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[103] Ibid, 35-39.
[104] Bodo Brinkmann, "The Artist," in *Witches' Lust and the Fall of Man: The Strange Fantasies of Hans Baldung Grien* (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2007), 21.
[105] Miriam Usher Chrisman, *Lay Culture, Learned Culture: Books and Social Change in Strasbourg, 1480-1599* (New Haven ; London: Yale University Press, 1982), 163. See also Chrisman, *Strasbourg and the Reform: A Study in the Process of Change*, 62–65.
[106] See Sebastian Brant, *The Ship of Fools*, trans. Edwin H. Zeydel (New York: Dover Publications, 1962).
[107] See Jakob Wimphelling, *Tutschland: Jacob Wympfflingers von Slettstatt Zu Ere Der Statt Straszburg Vnd Des Rinstroms ; Jetzo Nach 147. Jahren Zum Truck Gegeben Durch Hansz-Michel Moscherosch. Getruckt Zu Straszburg: Bey Johann Philip Mülber Vnd Josias Städeln, 1648* (Woodbridge: Research Publications, 1969).
[108] Destructive especially for followers of Karlstadt –see Sergiusz Michalski, *Reformation and the Visual Arts : The Protestant Image Question in Western and Eastern Europe* (London: Taylor and Francis ; ProQuest Ebook Central, 1993), 45, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu. The Rat's

subject, the heated debates of his peers reveal a growing uncertainty as to the capacity of pictures to illustrate Christological truths. Despite his defense of painting as God-given, by Caspar Peucer's account, even Albrecht Dürer felt that the "Eucharistic question…could not be expressed by means of an image."[109] Increased experimentation in largely secular artistic modes such as genre scenes and landscapes, as well as the distinction itself drawn later between religious and secular art, speak to this new consciousness of the image's limitations.[110]

In spite of this shifting awareness, and our historical understanding that what Sergiusz Michalski calls the "Protestant Image Question" had been gestating for some time, a reading of *Christ Carried* as a predictor of the Reformation ultimately fails to convince.[111] Its connection to Protestantism, like its relationship to the conventional Catholicism of its day, is neither straightforward nor fully knowable, and, furthermore, not backed up by any existing religious text or doctrinal item of which I am aware. For this reason, I do not attempt to pin *Christ Carried* down to a particular strand of belief. Instead, I bring up the question of it supposed Protestantism in order to gesture towards the early 16th century waning of the Catholic church's power, which

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rulings on iconoclasm are discussed in Chrisman, *Strasbourg and the Reform: A Study in the Process of Change*, 144.

[109] Gerlinde Wiederanders, *Albrecht Dürers theologische Anschauungen,* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1975), 92, quoted in Michalski, *The Protestant Image Question,* 193.

[110] These developments are explored in the following sources: Margaret A. Sullivan, "Bruegel the Elder, Pieter Aertsen, and the Beginnings of Genre," *The Art Bulletin* 93, no. 2 (2011): 127, https://doi.org/10.1080/00043079.2011.10786001.

See also Larry Silver, *Peasant Scenes and Landscapes : The Rise of Pictorial Genres in the Antwerp Art Market* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press ; Proquest Ebook Central, 2006), 11, 53, 227, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/lib/unc/detail.action?docID=3441825. Larry Silver, *Peasant Scenes and Landscapes : The Rise of Pictorial Genres in the Antwerp Art Market*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 11, 53, 227. Christopher S. Wood, *Albrecht Altdorfer and the Origins of Landscape : Revised and Expanded Second Edition*, 2nd ed. (London: Reaktion Books, Limited ; ProQuest Ebook Central, 2013), 210–13, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/lib/unc/detail.action?docID=1644070.

[111] Michalski, *The Reformation and the Visual Arts: The Protestant Image Question in Western and Eastern Europe.*

afforded a new degree of intellectual freedom and religious variety, without the likes of which Baldung's striking iconographic interpretations would not have been possible.

Christ Carried to Heaven by Angels, for all that its subject matter is religious, does not conform to its era's modes of piety. Moreover, especially when analyzed in response to Dürer, Baldung's print comprises a depersonalization of the Trinity. With its elegant and loving mood, the former's gentler depiction of a dead Christ in heaven is justified in that it unites the three-in-one while visually evoking both the emotional consequence of Jesus's sacrifice and the strength of God's paternal love. Dürer devises a careful balance between pathos and reassurance. Although safely embedded in a unified heavenly court, the Christ he presents is as beleaguered as Baldung's, with blood tricking down from his side-wound. At the same time, his creased brow and relaxed neck are as suggestive of ecstasy as they are of pain; there is an implied peacefulness to his repose.

Not so for Baldung's cumbersome Jesus, whose agony is reiterated by his relegation to the close foreground. Through this perspectival isolation, Baldung ensures that Father and Son must operate in entirely separate spatial dimensions from one another. As such, their only interaction becomes one of circular ambiguity, as though the strangeness of heaven and the insufficiency of Christ co-constituted one another. With its grotesque, aggressive putti and all but absent God, something is rotten in the state of paradise; worse still, the savior who comes to reign over it is almost comically under-qualified. Instead of emulating his mentor's use of Passion piety motifs to humanize the Trinity, Baldung formally forestalls a full empathetic engagement between the holy parties, and thus, between image and viewer.

As for the flood of putti who stream from God to Christ, they cannot fully bridge these realms, and when regarded beside the stately and sympathetic angel attendants depicted by

Dürer, scarcely inspire confidence. The putti's use of the shroud as sling recalls at once cultic altarpieces, reliquaries like that donated by Sixtus V to Montalto, and deposition images such as Rogier van der Weyden's from c. 1435, but with little of the typical deference (Fig. 13, 14). Whereas God in Dürer's *Holy Trinity* and the angel in Sixtus V's reliquary hoist Christ by the armpits, Baldung's putti let his torso topple down, their arms too short for such a grip to be conceivable. Their struggle begs the question of why God would dispense such small, sullen angels for an important task like the retrieval of his son, and what religious purpose their fumbling might possibly serve. Their arrangement diverges drastically from the format of angelic display that Hans Belting identifies as typical of the Imago Pietatis in its devotional use. Rather than "present[ing] the dead Christ as if…offering to give him over to us," their approach to his transportation is pragmatic and unpolished**,** hardly jibing with Belting's justification of the Man of Sorrows as analogue to the Host.[112]

Baldung's Christ is further peculiar in that he figures in something of a liminal state, in that the extent of his incapacity is left significantly vague. Though I have belabored the listless, cadaverous quality of his pose, the placement of his left arm gives one pause: cast diagonally over his chest, buckled at the elbow, then cocked at the wrist, with thumb and forefinger joined as though plucking at his clavicle. This detail complicates a reading of Jesus as (mere) corpse. While the rest of his body is so exaggeratedly supple as to seem leaden, that stiff right arm and twitchy hand situate him in an intermediate zone where his degree of consciousness and agency remains unsure. Thanks to this possible sign of life, not even Christ's death is portrayed in a clearly legible fashion.

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[112] Hans Belting, *The Image and Its Public in the Middle Ages: Form and Function of Early Paintings of the Passion (1981)*, trans. Mark Bartusis and Raymond Meyer (New Rochelle, New York: Arstide D. Caratzas, 1990), 68.

This is not the stylized blood-dripping Christ of medieval wound devotees, glorious in his morbidity. Nor does Baldung deal here with the faceless Christ of Northern Renaissance Passion texts, who, as James Marrow describes him, is "disfigur[ed] to the point of loss of physiognomic features."[113] Rather, Jesus comes across as realistically wretched –obviously too weak to intercess on behalf of the viewer, but not quite conclusively deceased. As Cynthia Robinson observes in her examination of Baldung's 1511 *Ecce Homo* print, the positing of an ambiguously dead and temporally dislocated Christ is typical of Baldung (Fig. 15). *Ecce Homo's* vacant-eyed Christ "seemingly presupposes [his own] death," yet concurrently "evokes the course of the Passion and Christ's suffering prior to the Crucifixion," resulting in in a "turbulent lament" that underlines the "contradiction between Christ's divine nature and the harshness of his human torment."[114]

Though Robinson holds that for the *Ecce Homo* engraving, the obfuscation of the Passion timeline and the "contradiction" that ensues from it deepen its devotional utility, the comparable inconsistency of *Christ Carried* achieves the opposite. Sapped of his strength and consigned to the borderline between life and death, this destabilized Christ deprives the beholder of a simple cathartic response. Though the psychological effect that such an image may have had on Baldung's audience is impossible to recreate, one wonders whether Christ's failure to assume a fixed state would have instilled a moment of anxiety. At the same time, given the extreme "religious pluralism" Sibylle Weber am Bach attributes to Strasbourg in Baldung's day, reactions

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[113] James H. Marrow, *Passion Iconography in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance : A Study of the Transformation of Sacred Metaphor into Descriptive Narrative* (Kortrijk, Belgium: Van Ghemmert Pub. Co, 1979), 56.
[114] Cynthia Robinson, "Ecce Homo," in *Hans Baldung Grien: Prints and Drawings*, ed. Alan Shestack and James H. Marrow (New Haven: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 153.

would presumably have been highly varied.[115] Moreover, any level of apprehension induced by the print was evidently not great enough to impede its survival and circulation.

Just as the Son's hand gesture obscures a neat reading of his meaning as symbol, so too do the wide-flung arms of the Father. Given Jesus's arrival, one might explain the pose as a welcoming embrace or an expression of mourning, but thanks again to context, neither interpretation feels complete. The angel at the bottom of the putti flood apes God's vaguely cruciform posture, as does the robed putto directly above him. Baldung's tripling of the gesture does not merely reaffirm its divine significance because the putti are contorted enough to appear as more than straightforward extensions of God. In conjunction with their clumsiness and mask-like, grotesque faces, one could argue that their mimicry seems slightly mocking, though not why, or of what.

This creeping note of disrespect, if such it constitutes, gains purchase because Baldung denies God a face of his own. The crude simplification of his features reduces him to a rote suggestion of majesty, neither fierce nor tender, but basically empty; godhead as figurehead. God's inscrutability is accompanied by a lack of justification or moralization where one would expect it. Like Robinson, Hults argues that this absence serves a devotional point. In her analysis of the print's relationship to the Reformation, she postulates that Baldung's unknowable God is predictive of the Protestant belief that such "spiritual cris[es]" are resolvable only by faith, rather than intellect.[116] To my mind, however, besides that 1515-1517 is too early for such full-fledged Protestantism, the reading of a faith-based solution to the problems the print poses is far from intuitive here. Instead, the novelty and cumulative bleakness of how Baldung arranges his ghastly Christ and remote Father is comprehensible in relation to emergent devotional concerns

[115] Weber am Bach, *Hans Baldung Grien (1484/85-1545) : Marienbilder in der Reformation*, 50. Translation mine.
[116] Hults, "Baldung and the Reformation," 50.

with the viewer's affective response to the divine, which allowed for a loosening of strictures regarding iconographic types than had been previously possible.

For instance, the intense concentration Baldung places on Christ's physical suffering –the puffy stigmata, slack thigh, and visible veins – can be understood as part of the broader theological and artistic tendency towards Passion realism that had been operative throughout Europe for some time. As Peter Parshall observes, "the gradual emergence of naturalism in northern religious art was accompanied by a marked amplification of violence, parody [and pathos]," a "peculiar realism" of "fraught meditational imagery" that hinges on Christ's torture and Crucifixion as demonstrations of God's love.[117] Religious history scholar Salvador Ryan tracks the roots of affective pietyto meditations on Christ's humanity by Anselm of Canterbury, who worked to humanize Christ's suffering so as to affirm that only a God-Man could redeem mankind. Following Anselm, Bernard of Clairvaux, Ludolph of Saxony, and, later, mystics like Bridget of Sweden and Julian of Norwich contemplated the tortures Christ might have endured from an emotional, physicalized perspective.[118]

The popular impact of such ideas is highly visible in religious art of the time from Germany, where miracle hosts such as those in Wilsnack and Brandenburg proliferated.[119] The *Echthaarkruzifixe* –crosses embedded with human hair –are visual testaments to this, as are statues like the Röttgen Pietà (Fig. 16).[120] Though Parshall relates such images, geared to evoke

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[117] Parshall, "The Art of Memory and the Passion," 468.
[118] Salvador Ryan, "Christ the Wounded Lover and Affective Piety in Late Medieval Ireland and Beyond," in *The Materiality of Devotion in Late Medieval Northern Europe : Images, Objects, Practices* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2016), 71. See Anselm, *The Prayers and Meditations of St. Anselm*. and Anselm, *Why God Became Man, and The Virgin Conception and Original Sin*.
[119] See Mitchell B. Merback, *Pilgrimage and Pogrom : Violence, Memory, and Visual Culture at the Host-Miracle Shrines of Germany and Austria* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012).
[120] For more on the Passion in sculpture, see Stefan Roller, *Nürnberger Bildhauerkunst der Spätgotik: Beiträge zur Skulptur der Reichsstadt in der Zweiten Hälfte des 15. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1999).

compassion, to "widespread preaching in the vernacular," "poplar piety," and a surge in mysticism, Caroline Walker Bynum notes that scholars have also attributed the 14th to 16th century fixation on Christ's physical torture to the rise of violent anti-Semitism, war, public executions, and witch persecution.[121] Intriguingly, while she does not entirely dismiss the notion that these expressions of social unrest may have contributed to the Northern concentration on Christ's bodily anguish, she maintains that "it is not clear…that the period between the 1350s and the 1520s was more cruel or violent than other medieval centuries," and thus, its torture obsession is not so simply explained.[122] This seems particularly true of the economically hearty Strasbourg, so calm as of 1514 that a visiting Erasmus sung its praises: "a monarchy without tyranny, an aristocracy without factions, a democracy without disorder, prosperity without luxury."[123]

Regardless of their causality, Baldung would have been well aware of the influx of Passion-centric meditations on the Vita Christi, such as Ulrich Pinder's *Speculum passionis,* which he himself helped illustrate, probably during his apprenticeship to Dürer.[124] He also would have been familiar with the post-Crucifixion, sometimes reanimated Jesus of the Man of Sorrows

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[121] Parshall, "The Art of Memory and the Passion," 470; Caroline Walker Bynum, *Wonderful Blood : Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 14. Though European witch persecution had not yet peaked in Baldung's lifetime, with the late 15th c. publication of important witchcraft treatise *Malleus Maleficarum,* the structures that allowed for its growth were already well in place. See Hans Peter Broedel, *The Malleus Maleficarum and the Construction of Witchcraft : Theology and Popular Belief* (Manchester ; New York: Manchester University Press, 2003).

[122] Bynum, *Wonderful Blood,* 14.

[123] Erasmus to Jacob Wimpfeling, quoted in Franklin L. Ford, *Strasbourg in Transition, 1648 – 1789*, (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1958), 14, and in Chrisman, *Strasbourg and the Reform,* 14.

[124] For more on *Speclum passionis'*s publication history and subsequent reception, see Alexandra Da Costa's "Ulrich Pinder's Speculum Passionis Christi and John Fewterer's Mirror Or Glass of Christ's Passion: Reflecting and Refracting Tradition," in *The Pseudo-Bonaventuran Lives of Christ: Exploring the Middle English Tradition,* edited by Ian Johnson and Allan F. Westphall. (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2013), 393-424; the assumption about Baldung having accomplished the work during his apprenticeship is mentioned in Gert Van der Osten and Horst Vey. *Painting and Sculpture in Germany and the Netherlands, 1500 to 1600.* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969), 97.

or Imago Pietatis type, which had been a common Northern devotional image since its reception as a Byzantine icon.[125] Though the motif has myriad variants, in Northern Europe, it tended to take on a exceptionally somber valence –as Mitchell B. Merback puts it, not "the Christ who, with arms raised, offers himself into the chalice," but "the dead Christ …that convey[s] the impression of a lifeless corpse," only brought to life by "the painter's vivifying art."[126]

Although operating outside the scriptural narrative, the Man of Sorrows is nonetheless dependent on context; he often stands weary, alone by the pillar, as in Dürer's engraving of 1500, *Man of Sorrows With Arms Outstretched* (Fig. 17), or is propped up by angels atop the sepulcher, as in the Norfolk triptych (Fig. 18). At full or half-length, hands tied or free, bounded by saints or bearing the cross, the figure is typically located either in the temporal bounds of the Passion sequence or the earthly matrix of the tomb.[127] When he appears outside of these environments, he generally has no fixed setting at all, save that of the artwork itself. Meister Francke's Man of Sorrows from circa 1420, an emaciated Christ with the Arma Christi and several angelic companions, illustrates this setting-less style well (Fig. 19).[128] The plain gold background offers no diverting details, channeling all of the viewer's focus straight to the martyr.

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[125] Hans Belting. "An Image and Its Function in the Liturgy: The Man of Sorrows in Byzantium." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 34/35 (1980), 4.

[126] Mitchell B. Merback, "The Man of Sorrows in Northern Europe: Ritual Metaphor and Therapeutic Exchange," in *New Perspectives on the Man of Sorrows*, edited by William L Barcham and Catherine R Puglisi, (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2013), 77-78.

[127] Different lengths of the icon are discussed in Grażyna Jurkowlaniec, "The Rise and Development of the Man of Sorrows in Central and Northern Europe," in *New Perspectives on the Man of Sorrows*, edited by William L Barcham and Catherine R Puglisi, (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2013), 51. Hand-bound Christ is mentioned in Colum Hourihane, "Defining Terms: Ecce Homo, Christ Mocked, and the Man of Sorrows," in *New Perspectives on the Man of Sorrows*, edited by William L Barcham and Catherine R Puglisi, (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2013), 31.

[128] For more on the significance of the Arma Christi in Passion devotion, see Lisa H. Cooper, Andrea Denny-Brown, and Mary Agnes Edsall. *The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture : With a Critical Edition of "O Vernicle."* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2014).

By contrast, Baldung foregrounds setting, conspicuously tucking his Imago Pietatis into that Dürer-esque ruffle of clouds, a rest stop on the long sojourn to the kingdom of heaven. Christ's movement into the paradisal sphere technically qualifies this as a scene of ascension, but it bears no resemblance to the Ascension proper of the Bible, nor its customary representation in art. Rather, one could assert that it makes sense as part of the iconographic tradition that scholars today call the Gnadenstuhl ("Throne of Mercy"). Berthold Kress, who, incidentally, feels the term to be something of a misnomer, describes the formation with which it is associated as "an image of the Trinity, consisting of the Father (who is often crowned) holding the crucified Son, and the Holy Ghost represented as a dove."[129] While the open-armed stance of God and bird embodiment of the Spirit in *Christ Carried* solicit the Gnadenstuhl type, Baldung undermines the motif's Trinitarian implication by disrupting its traditional patterning.

Gnadenstuhl images, in Baldung's time and long before, follow an overwhelming format of frontality. From its more static, icon-reminiscent treatment in Dürer's 1511 *Adoration of the Trinity* (Fig. 20), to earlier works like the Westphalian altarpiece from St. Maria zur Wiese in Soest (Fig. 21), most Throne of Mercy images run along a symmetrical vertical axis, with all three members of the Trinity presented head on.[130] Likewise for Men of Sorrows; whether cradled by the Virgin, as is Hans Memling's from c. 1480 (Fig. 22), or standing feebly, like Hans Multscher's on the portal of Ulm Minster (Fig. 23), the Imago Pietatis tends to encourage the observer to contemplate Christ as though he were standing right in front of them, a perspectival choice that allows for intimate study of the holy visage.

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[129] Berthold Kress, "A Relief by Peter Dell (1548) After a Drawing by Paul Lautensack, and the Origins of the Term 'Gnadenstuhl'','" *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 73 (2010): 194..

[130] An excellent analysis of the theological basis for Dürer's 1511 *Adoration of the Magi* comes from the classic text by Erwin Panofsky, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), 125-131.

The frontal standard of both motifs goes absent in the print by Baldung, which shows Christ from a slant-wise angle, his head so far back that his face is actually upside down. Here, Baldung takes his cues from Dürer, whose *Holy Trinity* of 1511 already qualifies as a slight deviation from the frontal Gnadenstuhl norm; note the delicate twisting diagonal at which Dürer places Christ in his father's hands, a sinuous pose that can also be seen in Jan Polack's 1491 piece for the high altar in Blutenberg (Fig. 24). The more exaggerated lopsidedness of Baldung's Christ takes this idea several steps further, while the Father and Dove, though maintaining frontality, are so firmly back-grounded and abstracted that they provide little in the way of meditation-inducing material. As well as separating Christ from the other two Trinitarian elements, Baldung frustrates the spectator's view of all three.

Ultimately, Baldung's vision of the Trinity is one of deep isolation. His careful treatment of space, gesture, and motif serve to discomfit and displace that which Dürer renders stable and strong. In this way, he establishes himself as an artist who is aware and even respectful of the pictorial traditions which came before him, but unafraid to bend them to new ends. Discussing the prescriptive nature of Renaissance Passion imagery, Parshall writes that instead of or in addition to representing an actual event, the post-crucified Christ in art may gesture towards that which cannot be seen, calling upon the viewer "to lend the image certain qualities and attributes in order to give it a distinct and private meaning."[131]

This understanding of what such an image can accomplish, however, lies upon its conforming to a familiar template for access to the sacred –the aforementioned gnadenstuhl, Imago Pietatis, or a related pattern. Since *Christ Carried to Heaven by Angels* does not adhere to the compositional conventions of such iconographic types, it does not seem certain to have held the same meditative capacity. Instead, Baldung's deconstruction of these motifs pulls Christ

[131] Peter Parshall, "The Art of Memory and the Passion," 469.

down into the realm of ordinary dead things while declining to supply a devotional gloss for the suffering that is portrayed. In this way, the representational traditions of the past and the opportunity for inventiveness provided to Baldung and his contemporaries by vanishing conventions on the eve of the Reformation become the materials by which the artist forges a visual code that continues to resist explanation.

CHAPTER THREE: Lust and Alienation in Baldung's *Adam and Eve* (1519)

Where the von Wettin altarpieces navigate the role of the artist and patron in editorializing sacred narratives, to the potential de-emphasis of their cultic or devotional functions, *Christ Carried to Heaven by Angels* de-familiarizes the iconography of Passion devotion in such a way as to call its salvific properties into question. Completing this triad of disorientation, Baldung's 1519 *Adam and Eve* breaks with the broader representational tradition of a paradisiacal, innocent, and balanced prelapsarian existence to depict the first humans as creatures of not only lust, but anxiety (Fig. 25). In so doing, the work constitutes a furthering of the artist's tendency to introduce seemingly unjustified or unjustifiable iconographic content into established visual formats, resulting in an image for which no one clear-cut response exists. Instead, his inventive translation of the biblical figures into a fraught interpersonal situation opens up a new valley of interpretative potential.

Like his witches and cadavers, the first man and woman were pet subjects for Baldung, even much later in his career, when some scholars have argued that his work shifted away from religiosity in general.[132] Of his many variations on the motif, one commonality emerges: the choice to show Adam embracing Eve from behind, openly groping or displaying her body so that the Fall becomes an all-but-explicitly sexual event. This sexualization of Adam and Eve's relationship, though present in all of Baldung's portrayals of the scene, takes on subtly different valences each time it appears. What renders his 1519 *Adam and Eve* distinct from earlier and later versions of same is that his eroticization of the couple is accompanied by a pronounced tension between them, ironically highlighted by their physical proximity. Though Baldung positions Adam and Eve frontally, instead of occupying separate sides of the tree, they are

[132] Hults, "Baldung and the Reformation," 59.

grouped as one before it –a novel spatial reconfiguration, typical of Baldung's variations on this theme (Fig. 26), that entails a freeing up of psychological possibilities, too.[133]

The print's unusual dimensions –almost three times as long as it is wide –immediately restrict the viewer's field of vision to the couple and their interaction, keeping narrative trappings to a relentless minimum. Adam and Eve effectively dominate this compressed space, the surroundings of which are indicated only by the barren tree behind them. Though focal, the couple is cleverly obfuscated. Eve, with a round, non-specific fruit in each hand, is placed frontally, but turns her face and upper torso to the side, her right arm bathed in shadow. Occupying much of the composition, she obscures our line of vision towards Adam, behind her, who is further shrouded by shading. His right arm, lightly gripping a rather suggestive fig branch, is bisected by the print's frame, which is too narrow to contain his elbow, so that only his shoulder and wrist are visible.[134] What prominence he lacks in space, however, Adam makes up for in gesture. Neck hunched and eyes opaque, he clamps one hand over Eve's shoulder and, crossing his left calf over his excessively vascular right, appears to stomp on her foot. This serpentine configuration of feet institutes the sole area of negative space between Adam and Eve, as Adam's leg must diverge from Eve's briefly in order for his foot to land on hers. Otherwise, their bodies do not break contact with each other. This convolution draws the eye towards Eve's un-stomped-on right foot, which perches atop a square placard bearing the artist's signature.

Thus, the narrow proportions of the image work to exaggerate its essential, claustrophobic precariousness. Instead of constituting a lynchpin around which the rest of the composition revolves, Eve is unsteady at its center. The fruits are about to drop from her hands,

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[133] Though not, in this case, without precedence –see Hugo van der Goes's Vienna Diptych and Dürer's Fall from the Small Passion.

[134] Suggestivity of the branch mentioned in Helen Diane Russell, "Hans Baldung Grien: Adam and Eve (Cat. 72)," in *Eva/Ave: Woman in Renaissance and Baroque Prints* (Washington ; New York: National Gallery of Art ; The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1990), 126.

and if she brings down her foot, Baldung's initials will likewise fall to the ground, ceasing to be visible to the viewer. In his analysis of Baldung's signature placement, Koerner argues that the impending plummet of fruit and tablet signifies not only the moral fall of humankind generally, but also the self-deprecating "little death of the artist."[135] While Koerner's assertion that the artist's choice to position his monogram where one must imagine it being trampled may reflect an "attitude" of "self-ascecis" is compelling, of greater relevance here is his claim that in the instability of his figures' positions, Baldung "insists upon…the irreducibly *temporal* nature of his scenes."[136]

By constructing an image that is both literally and metaphorically poised for a fall, Baldung locks the first man and woman down to a specific moment. Yet exactly where this moment falls in the Biblical narrative is left significantly opaque. The harshness of Adam and Eve's expressions would seem to preclude a reading of the woodcut as prelapsarian. In light of this, and of the absence of a serpent here, Alan Shestack and James Marrow take the position that "the real subject of this print is the subsequent impact of the Fall upon Adam and Eve," rather than the Fall itself, but neglect to account for why the fruit Eve holds is unbitten, if this fateful rebellion has already taken place.[137] While the immensely influential Augustine wrote that a "moderate" and controlled "sexual drive" existed before the Fall, Bodo Brinkmann puts forth a theory that Baldung's portrayals of the pair correspond instead to Agrippa's notion that "the first

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[135] Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art*, 414.
[136] Ibid, 415. For more on Baldung's self-mocking monograms, see the rest of this entire chapter, "The Death of the Artist," 411-447. Though only one possible interpretation of his strategy, and implies a level of moralization that is not entirely provable. Ending quote is from ibid, 314.
[137] James H. Marrow and Alan Shestack, "The Fall of Man (Cat. 75)," in *Hans Baldung Grien: Prints and Drawings*, ed. Alan Shestack and James H. Marrow (New Haven: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 243.

act of sexual union takes place with the Fall and not before."[138] When viewed through this lens, Baldung's depictions of Adam and Eve might be understood to show that the first sex act was already a sin.

Somewhere between these two perspectives, Koerner suggests that the print shows "the moment just before the fall into sin and death," in which case the perceived self-consciousness of Eve and lustfulness of Adam are not consequences of sin, but parts of human nature hitherto.[139] Thanks to the pared-down nature of Baldung's composition, each of these interpretations are plausibly valid. The imbalanced, almost perilous embrace of the first parents intimates the feeling of a particular, pivotal instant, but Baldung withholds any solid indication of its relationship to Biblical time in general. Instead, questions of the print's location in the Genesis sequence are superseded by the timelessness of the body language between Adam and Eve, who Baldung particularizes to the point that they cease to be archetypes and develop into individuals.

This effect is largely constructed through body language. Cast for the most part in light, rather than darkness like Adam, Eve's face is prominent, its expression unhappy. Her brow furrows, while her eyes meet neither Adam's nor the viewer's, isolating her in her own experience of discomfort. This facial attitude, so jarringly human in contrast to Adam's quasi-animal blankness, is reiterated along the length of her entire body. Her right arm, pulled up at the shoulder and crooked at the elbow, is draw in towards the waist, where she bends slightly away from Adam. Meanwhile, her left arm, at her side, is twisted behind her. The implications of this contorted expression and pose have been variously interpreted. On the one hand, Helen Diane Russell views Eve's seemingly self-protective gestures as indicative of "distress" and possible

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[138] Bodo Brinkmann, "Sin Without Salvation: The Inescapable Unity of Love, Sin, and Death," in *Witches' Lust and the Fall of Man: The Strange Fantasies of Hans Baldung Grien*, ed. Bodo Brinkmann (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2007), 180.
[139] Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art,* 414.

"distaste" at the sexual act.[140] Echoing this assessment and even employing the same word, but escalating his reading a step further, Brian E. Cummings suggests Eve's "distress at her imminent rape."[141] By contrast, Koerner holds that the phallic fig leaf "reveals Eve's irritation to be nothing less than carnal arousal itself."[142]

These three understandings of Eve's reaction to Adam's touch, while not diametrically opposed to one another, are different enough to demonstrate the interaction's inherent multivalence. The figure of Adam, like Eve, provokes art historical analyses that conflict with one another. For example, whereas Berthold Hinz views him as "a sinister figure driven by his physical urges," Marrow and Shestack allege that Adam's shadowed face, which contrasts so profoundly with the smug Adam of Baldung's later renditions (see Fig. 27), "strongly suggests inner reflection."[143] As well as reiterating the ambivalent nature of the print's affective charge, these varied responses reflect confusion over the agency of the figures Baldung depicts. Just as the print's temporal location is seemingly vested with importance while remaining hard to pin down, the question of who is at fault for the Fall overshadows the print, but has more than one intuitive answer. The lack of narrative frame underscores that culpability falls squarely on human shoulders. But which human? Is Eve the temptress here, as one is accustomed to seeing with Baldung, or is it the animalistic Adam?[144]

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[140] Russell, "Hans Baldung Grien: Adam and Eve (cat. 72)," 126.
[141] Brian Cummings, "Soft Selves," in *Mortal Thoughts: Religion, Secularity, & Identity in Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture* (Oxford Scholarship Online: 2013), 294, doi: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199677719.001.0001
[142] Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art,* 413.
[143] Berthold Hinz, "Baldung and Dürer: Nudes and the Occasions for Depicting Them," in *Witches' Lust and the Fall of Man: The Strange Fantasies of Hans Baldung Grien*, ed. Bodo Brinkmann (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2007), 214. Marrow and Shestack, "The Fall of Man (Cat. 75)."
[144] Baldung's emphasis on Eve, compared to whom Adam often appears passive, has Charles H. Talbot to group her in with his seductive witch figures as "women who allure their own destruction" via their fatal attractiveness. See Talbot, "Baldung and the Female Nude," in *Hans Baldung Grien: Prints and Drawings*, ed. James H. Marrow and Alan Shestack, (New Haven: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 36.

Baldung's implicit standpoint on human culpability for the Fall cannot be productively assessed without an acknowledgement of the religious framework in which it developed. Locating the writings of St. Paul as early examples of the "subordinationist" interpretation of Genesis, James Grantham Turner describes such a theological stance as one that places the blame for the Fall almost entirely on Eve, whose rebellion was often brought forth as proof of the "weakness, inferiority, depravity, auxiliary status, and natural subordination" of women generally.[145] With this in mind, Baldung's smug Eve figures often read as typical of the woman-as-temptress model, particularly in light of his later fixation on the sexual power of women in his witchcraft prints. For example, the downcast eyes and smirking expressions of his Budapest Eve conveys a coy self-assurance of their own attractiveness (Fig. 27). As Hults-Boudreau describes her, Baldung's Eve exhibits a "relentless sexuality" that is at once "sympathetic" and nefarious in its "hedonism."[146]

The sexual confidence and aura of knowledge that often characterizes Eve as rendered by Baldung is not, however, present in his version of her from the 1519 woodcut. Though her entire body is on display to the viewer, she gives no indication of taking pride in this. Instead, she shies away from both Adam and the observer. Instead of acting as seductive sexual initiator, her role here is a reactive one of apparent disgust. Relating the print to a drawing by Dürer where Adam and Eve's bodies are drawn together by Satan's claws (Fig. 28), Hinz writes that in the 1519 image, Eve's "stance and gestures are those of a person under attack as she is forced to suffer the assault from behind."[147] In the moment depicted, at least, Adam is the pursuer. For all that his body is mostly covered by Eve's, he is in control of their stance, as is perhaps best illustrated by

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[145] James Grantham Turner, *One Flesh: Paradisal Marriage and Sexual Relations in the Age of Milton (1993)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press ; Oxford Scholarship Online, 2011), 97.
[146] Linda C. Hults, "Baldung and the Reformation," in *Hans Baldung Grien: Prints and Drawings*, ed. Alan Shestack and James H. Marrow (New Haven: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 55.
[147] Hinz, "Baldung and Dürer: Nudes and the Occasions for Depicting Them," 215.

his trampling of her foot. Encumbered by the fruit in her hands, Eve cannot escape his overpowering embrace. This uneven dynamic, resembling strongly Baldung's death and the maiden rape scenes, implies men's lustfulness is at least equally to blame as women's. Regardless, the figures' respective degrees of guilt cannot be swiftly ascertained because the tension between them is complicated and, in this way, realistically human.

In addition to his placement of his figures, Baldung accomplishes his personalization of Adam and Eve through attention to the particular features of their bodies. Like those of Ernst von Wettin and Saint Sebastian over a decade earlier, their faces are individualized rather than generic or idealized–Adam's angular and almost vulpine, Eve's hood-lidded and bubble-chinned. Though one would not necessarily characterize them as ugly, Lise Wajeman relates their "graceless faces" to theological notions of the deforming effects of sin.[148] When Adam and Eve are depicted as less than stunning elsewhere –the example she states is Michelangelo's aged Adam and Eve leaving the Garden (Fig. 29) –it is because their disobedience has diminished their closeness to God and, thus, their ability to resemble him outwardly. In Baldung's woodcut, however, Adam and Eve remain in a paradise –however paltry –and may or may not have fully entered into sin. If one follows Koerner's notion that the print shows the moment just before the Fall, and considers the sixteenth-century assumption, as unpacked by Wajeman, that in visual representations of religious figures, "ugliness, like portraiture, would function as too particular a form of embodiment and would be, for this reason, [perceived as] desacralizing."[149] Baldung's choice to present Adam and Eve as distinctive beings reads as near irreverent.

Of course, any charge of impudence relates, more obviously, to the print's intense sexual overtones. For all that early modern experts tend to disagree over the theological, moral, and

[148] Lise Wajeman, *La Parole d'Adam, Le Corps d'Ève: Le Péché Original Au XVIe Siècle* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2007), 87. Translation mine.
[149] Ibid. Translation mine.

psychological implications of Adam and Eve's interaction here, they are more or less unanimous that Baldung was the first artist to portray the Fall via an "overtly sexual gesture" –not in this print, but in his 1511 chiaroscuro print of the Fall (Fig. 30).[150]Although, as Margaret R. Miles observes, just because his images of Adam and Eve appear to us now as designed to be erotic, we cannot take it for granted that they would be considered so at the time, historians have good reason to believe this is the case.[151] Miles's argument to this end relies on Anne Hollander's concept of the "body-and-clothes unit": that "implied absent clothing" –in Baldung's case, petite breasts and a curved stomach that mimic Renaissance fashion mores –denotes eroticization.[152]

Hinz, likewise, hones in on Baldung's penchant for stylization, remarking that the "[h]ips, stomachs, and thighs" of his female nudes tend to be "disproportionally prominent," and their legs unrealistically short, creating a disparity of volume that he feels must accord to Baldung's "personal preferences."[153] Though I would argue that the 1519 *Adam and Eve* is not the best representative of this latter tendency, since, especially when compared to later works like *Judith with the Head of Holofernes,* it is fairly naturalistic, implied eroticism crops up here in the placement of Eve's body (Fig. 31). Besides shadows and a leaf that reveal more than they conceal, Baldung makes no attempt to disguise her nakedness. This aesthetic of display is itself is in keeping with a perception of the work as invested with some degree of sexualization.

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[150] To name just a few scholars who agree on this point, see Giulia Bartrum, "Hans Baldung, Called Grien," in *German Renaissance Prints* (London: British Museum Press, 1995), 72.; Caroline Campbell, "Hans Baldung Grien: The Fall of Man, 1511/Adam and Eve with Serpent, 1514 (Cats. 24-25," in *Temptation in Eden : Lucas Cranach's Adam and Eve*, ed. Caroline Campbell and Stephanie Buck (London: Courtauld Institute of Art Gallery in association with Paul Holberton Publishing, 2007), 138. Quote from Bartrum, "Hans Baldung, Called Grien," 72.

[151] Margaret R. Miles, *Carnal Knowing: Female Nakedness and Religious Meaning in the Christian West* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 135.Margaret R. Miles, *Carnal Knowing : Female Nakedness and Religious Meaning in the Christian West* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1989), 135.

[152] Anne Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes* (New York: Avon, 1980), 98-99, qtd in Miles, *Carnal Knowing,* 136.

[153] Hinz, "Baldung and Dürer: Nudes and the Occasions for Depicting Them," 219.

While his depiction was unprecedented in the visual arts thus far, in positing mankind's loss of innocence as an explicitly sexual one, Baldung relies on a longstanding theological armature. The writings of Augustine, were among the most influential regarding the relationship between sin and eros, and had lasting relevance throughout the Middle Ages and into the Reformation era. Rather than condemning sexuality altogether, as James Grantham Turner notes, Augustine "makes the all-important, though precarious, distinction between lust *(libido, concupiscentia)* and sexuality itself."[154] The latter, an "involuntary priapism" of sexual arousal, where as "a judgment on human disobedience of God, the human body refuses to obey the will" is sinful.[155] "Controlled love-making" of a deliberate sort, however, with the first parents operating their sexual organs "as we move our hands," would have been a wholesome way to reproduce before the Fall.[156] Many centuries later, Augustine's teachings were continually echoed in the writings of Luther and other early modern theologians, as they developed new theories of marriage.[157] Most relevantly here, his mistrust of human genitalia resonates later in the writings of Erasmus, who notes in *Enchiridion militis Christiani* that "the pudenda of the body…with its foul incitements it, alone of all the members, continually promotes rebellion in spite of the king's fruitless protests."[158]

This Augustinian and Protestant preoccupation with bodily control has some bearing on Dürer's conception of Adam and Eve, which Franz-Joachim Verspohl, referring to the famous

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[154] Turner, *One Flesh,* 43.
[155] Ibid; see Augustine, "XIV.16," in *City of God, Books VII-XVI*, trans. Gerald Walsh and Grace Monahan (Catholic University of America Press ; ProQuest Ebook Central, 1952), 388–89, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu.
[156] Turner, *One Flesh,* 45; see Augustine, "XIV.23–4," trans. Gerald Walsh and Grace Monahan (Washington: Catholic University of America Press ; ProQuest Ebook Central, 1952), 399–404, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu.
[157] See Turner's discussion of Protestant readings of Augustine and teachings on marriage and sexuality in *One Flesh: Paradisal Marriage and Sexual Relations in the Age of Milton (1994)* 49-95.
[158] Erasmus, *The Enchiridion*, trans. Raymond Himelick (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1970). qtd in Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture,* 295.

1504 engraving, describes as a expressing an "impersonal perfection" (Fig. 32).[159] With their carefully proportioned bodies, placid visages, and unnatural poses, they are incredibly remote from Baldung's tumultuous figures. [160] Christiane Hertel, following Wölfflin's interpretation, writes of the 1504 print's drastic exteriority. The figure's physical selves take such precedence over their internal ones that "if they possess interiority, its focus is elsewhere."[161] Despite all the care Dürer takes to reproduce a variety of realistic textures, paying close attention to Adam and Eve's skin, cartilage, and even pubic hair, the "frosty" quality of their perfection renders them untouchable.[162] Moreover, all hints towards their sexuality are purely symbolic; one could no more imagine a pair of statues engaging in intimacy.

A comparison of the Dürer's work to Baldung's is appropriate, since the fame and influence of the 1504 print, completed during Baldung's apprenticeship, meant that his pupil would have surely seen it.[163] Again, it is not that Baldung's take on the subject is a direct foil to his teacher's but the difference in their formal choices –especially regarding composition, employment of line, and treatment of nature –is marked and deeply indicative of their disparate approaches to their subject matter. Returning to a discussion of line and shading, Baldung's darker, rougher strokes immediately denote a realism of a different sort. Instead of seeking a rigorous, naturalistic but beyond-real level of textural representation, Baldung conveys the

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[159] Franz-Joachim Verspohl, "die Entdeckung der Schönheit des Körpers," in *Erfindung des Menschen*, ed. Richard van Dülmen, (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1998), 148, qtd in Wajeman, *La parole d'Adam,* 86. Translation mine.

[160] For more on Dürer's notions of idealized proportions, and how they fit with his ideas about the process of visualization more generally, see Peter Parshall, "Graphic Knowledge: Albrecht Dürer and the Imagination." *The Art Bulletin* 95, no. 3 (2013): 393-410. http://www.jstor.org/stable/43188839.

[161] Christiane Hertel, "Petrifaction and melancholia in Dürer's Lucretia," *Word & Image*, 24 no. 1, (2008), DOI: 10.1080/02666286.2008.10444072, 16.

[162] Heinrich Wölfflin, *Die Kunst Albrecht Dürers* (Munich: Bruckmann, 1984), 125, qtd in Hertel, "Petrification," 16.

[163] Panofsky, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer,* 124; Jeffrey Chipps Smith, "Chapter 5: Dürer and Sculpture," in *The Essential Dürer,* ed. Jeffrey Chipps Smith and Larry Silver (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press ; Proquest Ebook Central, 2010), 88, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu.

affective impressions of his subjects and allows the viewer to imagine their details. He has shading patterns of his own, but adheres to them more loosely, allowing irregular spacing intervals to occur within a group of lines.[164] Whereas Dürer's patches of brightness and shadow emerge gradually, Baldung transitions sharply between areas of intense light and darkness. One example of this occurs on Eve's right shoulder, where a patch of short lines –presumably from the shadow of Adam's face –comes to an abrupt end at her clavicle, followed by a blank space. The cumulative effect of these saturated regions is that of an especially strong light source, as though the sun were beating down on the figures –a far cry from the soft luminescence suggested in Dürer's print.

Though Dürer depicts the first parents in a state of nature, it is a perfected one, as accords with its setting in a prelapsarian society, in which the first disobedience to God has not yet marred the shape of the world. The will of God and the will of man remain one and the same in the moment depicted by his 1504 print. If the laws of nature as we know them now do not apply –the apple tree has fig leaves, the snake wears a fanciful crown –it is entirely justified by the paradisal nature of the setting.[165] Formally, the harmony of man, nature, and God are evoked not only in the mathematical, quasi-classical idealization of Adam and Eve, but in the neat, fine strokes Dürer employs. Shadows are indicated on the couple's smooth flesh by a regular pattern of stippling; landscape features in the background follow a precise and intricate cross-hatching scheme; and while the trees have their knots and furrows –seeming imperfections –they are nevertheless depicted in coherent, close-together lines that continue Dürer's systematic approach

[164] As with the comparison between *Christ Carried to Heaven by Angels* and Dürer's *Holy Trinity,* however, some of this stylistic disparity may accounted for by the cutter of the print, as well as, in the case, a difference in medium between Dürer's and Baldung's works compared here. Nevertheless, the planes of shading I discuss here, even if not so drastically delineated in the initial design, are still distinct enough from Dürer's gentle shading effects that this commentary is warranted.
[165] Disparity between leaf and fruit noted by Wajeman, *La parole d'Adam,* 61.

to shading. The orderliness of this Eden, as well as providing an opportunity for the artist to envision a perfectible nature, dovetails nicely with a conception of humanity's closeness to God before the Fall, even if the symbols of impending betrayal are present, too.[166]

The climate of Baldung's work is far more severe. While Dürer's forest, as mentioned, is somewhat rugged, and the woods seem dark and deep, the lush leaves and buoyant tufts of grass in his engraving's background imply abundance and health, too, as befits God's garden. Baldung's leafless tree is likewise rough looking, but not as appealingly so, its spindly hanging vines suggesting either difficult terrain or an advanced age. As for the fruits –ostensibly instruments of rebellion –their divine role is de-emphasized here to the extent that they appear more as formal devices than symbols. As Wajeman notes, the lack of tree-leaves and the masking effect of Baldung's shadows "prohibits any certain identification" of the fruits' species.[167] The absence of healthy plant life elsewhere draws the viewer's attention to the up-curling fig branch in Adam's hand. Barely covering Eve's crotch, the leaf figures as less of a sign of modesty than one of sexual arousal, if not aggression, aping, as Koerner asserts, "the form of Adam's excited genitals as they would appear directly behind Eve."[168] Nature according to Baldung, it would seem, already shares in mankind's potential for harshness and lasciviousness.

While Dürer's chilly, idyllic *Adam and Eve* of 1504 contrasts strongly with Baldung's later print, this is not to say that the latter always presented prelapsarian man as virtually asexual. Instead, his 1507 painting of Adam and Eve (Fig. 33), whose composition clearly guided Baldung's own of c. 1525 (Fig. 27), hints towards the Fall as a sexual event, but is tonally more

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[166] The cat and mouse, mountain ash, etc. See Panofsky, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer,* 124-125.
[167] Wajeman, *La parole d'Adam, le corps d'Ève: le péché original au XVIe siècle,* 60-1. Translation mine. Perhaps reflecting a lack of theological certainty –Molanus argues for the apple as placeholder.
[168] Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art,* 413.

restrained. Side by side in darkly back-grounded panels, Dürer's Adam and Eve relate via what Linda Hults calls "a blushing anticipation and hesitance," a relatively innocent and shameless nudity that reads as more sensual than sexual.[169] Hinz argues that these paintings, made "not for a religious purpose but intended from the outset as demonstration pieces…brought a secularization of the 'Fall,' which soon became a subject which an artist might choose for himself."[170] Elsewhere, in his *Adam and Eve* from the Small Passion, Dürer goes further in alluding to a physical relationship between the first parents (Fig. 34). Breaking the side-by-side, frontal format he often utilizes for his portrayals of Adam and Eve, he depicts the two approaching the tree in an embrace. Eve's right arm is flung around Adam's shoulder, while her left accepts the apple from the serpent's mouth. Adam, meanwhile, winds his own right arm around Eve's waist, and bends his left at the elbow, in a gesture that, combined with his tilted head, appears conversational. While their crossed legs mostly conceal their genital regions, a conspicuous lack of fig leaves pulls the eye there, anyway.

Thus, Dürer's approach to potential sexual contact between Adam and Eve is not antithetical to Baldung's. Like Baldung, Dürer posits a closeness between the first parents, one that likely includes an enjoyment of each other's bodies, as part of life before the Fall. Instead, the main difference between his vision of prelapsarian sexuality and that of his pupil– besides, of course, their poses –is the degree of self-consciousness present in their bearings. If Dürer's figures can sometimes be said to lack interiority, Baldung's have this in excess. In the 1519 print, their physical communication teems with equal lust and apprehension. Instead of companionably sharing in intimacy, as Dürer's couple from the Small Passion might be said to do, Baldung's Adam and Eve are locked in a power struggle.

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[169] Hults, "Baldung and the Reformation," 54.
[170] Hinz, "Baldung and Dürer: Nudes and the Occasions for Depicting Them," 212.

As Charles H. Talbot notes, this "competition and tension…between women and men" is one of the primary themes of Baldung's entire oeuvre.[171] More often than not, the interpersonal relationships he depicts, though sexualized, appear charged with conflict –not only between the individuals present, but also between the figures and the observer. Hinz asserts that the half-hidden positioning of the male lover –whether Adam or Death, since Baldung's Death and the Maiden images tend to follow the same format –institutes a kind of "rivalry between him and the viewer."[172] This rivalry doubles as an indictment, or at least an acknowledgement, of the observer, whose act of looking becomes an intrusion. As Koerner relays it, in his eroticization of both the kiss of death and the Fall of Man, and particularly the way he orients Eve's (or the Maiden's) body in relation to his audience, "annihilate[s]" any comfortable distance between "original sin and the beholder's fallenness."[173]

This insistence on the relevance of his allegorical scenes to the real life of his viewer is augmented by the suggestions that the interaction shown in his 1519 *Adam and Eve* could just as easily take place in contemporary Germany. Though, given its leaflessness, the tree's species is indeterminate, its roughness calls to mind the "macabre vegetative excrescences" of Albrecht Altdorfer's Northern wilderness images (Fig. 35).[174] Moreover, Eve's upswept hair is a rarity for portrayals of the first parents, both within Baldung's own oeuvre and in those of his mentor and contemporaries. While the long golden tresses of Dürer's 1507 Eve are swept or perhaps tied back from her face, they hang down past her waist, as is logical for the theoretically artless realm she still inhabits (Fig. 33). The same can be said for Lucas Cranach's Eve (Fig. 36), whose hair is

[171] Talbot, "Baldung and the Female Nude," 20.
[172] Hinz, "Baldung and Dürer: Nudes and the Occasions for Depicting Them," 209.
[173] Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art,* 298.
[174] Wood, *Albrecht Altdorfer and the Origins of Landscape,* 190.

tidied but loose, as well as all of Baldung's, besides the one shown in the 1519 print, who constitutes the sole exception.

Hair styling as a marker of social status predates Christianity; as Miles observes, "in secular Roman society, hair was arranged in accordance with a woman's sexual status –long and flowing if the woman was a virgin, or bound on the head in a chignon if the woman was married."[175] This norm lingered into the Middle Ages, at which time married women otherwise only wore their hair loose as a ritual of mourning, "express[ing] a suspension of the normal social code" to display grief.[176] On one level, Baldung's arrangement of Eve's hair into a style reserved for married women serves to underscore his suggestion that she is no longer a maiden, but it concurrently acts as a de-historicizing allusion to contemporary society and thus a subtle form of "dual referencing."[177] In this regard, it is comparable to the sheer gauze Eve wears in his circa 1531 *Adam and Eve* at the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, which goes a step further in distance from the Biblical narrative (Fig. 26). Just as one imagines that the Eve of the Bible would have neither cause nor inclination to tie up her hair, she would have no use for such a scarf, which does not even cover her nakedness.[178] Moreover, fabric of any sort would not exist in a state of nature. Costly, ahistorical, and reminiscent of the garb then worn by sex workers, the sheet of gossamer is suggestive of early modern fallen-ness, instead of prelapsarian naïveté, as seen in faux-coincidental coverings like the carefully placed the fig leaves in Dürer's 1504 engraving.[179]

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[175] Miles, *Carnal Knowing,* 49.
[176] Robert Bartlett, "Symbolic Meanings of Hair in the Middle Ages," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society,* 4 (1994), 54. doi:10.2307/3679214.
[177] Corine Schleif, "Nicodemus and Sculptors: Self-Reflexivity in Works by Adam Kraft and Tilman Riemenschneider," *The Art Bulletin* 75, no. 4 (December 1993): 600.
[178] Brinkmann, "Sin Without Salvation: The Inescapable Unity of Love, Sin, and Deathe Unity of Love, Sin, and Death," 156.
[179] Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture,* 298.

Though I do not argue that Eve's hairstyle in the 1519 woodcut is intended to be erotic, as is the gauze in the later painting, the comparable modernity of her hair's arrangement gives further credence to Koerner's notion that Baldung's depictions of the Fall are intended to specifically confront his audience. In his insistence on the sexual and emotional consequences of mankind's first sin, as well as its linkage to death, his treatments of the motif have something in common with Cranach's "contemplating," shameful Adam (Fig. 36), Lucas van Leyden's sexually charged Fall engravings (Fig. 37), and the "skeletal" tree of knowledge of Hans Sebald Beham (Fig. 38). [180] Despite its potential influence on these peers and successors, however, Baldung's 1519 *Adam and Eve* remains distinct, both in his own body of work and the broader art milieu of his era for its portrayal of lust, animality, and interpersonal cruelty as something of a prerequisite for humanity.

It is necessary to bear in mind, however, that this print, for all that it is striking, constitutes not a definitive statement on the nature of sin, or the foibles of mankind, or the dangers of sex, or the inevitability of suffering and death. Instead, it is just one iteration of a favorite theme, one possible way of visually rendering the biblical story, and opening it up to new philosophical and interpretative horizons, almost akin to a thought experiment. While the portrayal of an explicitly sexually knowing Adam and Eve was indeed relatively new, its acceptance speaks not only to Baldung's originality, but to the ethos of the time in which his early art-making occurred, when, as Bonnie Noble puts it, Protestant rules regulating artistic

[180] Stephanie Buck, "Framing the Image: Lucas Cranach's *Adam and Eve* and Book Illustration," in *Temptation in Eden : Lucas Cranach's Adam and Eve,* 37; Elise Lawton Smith, "Women and the Moral Argument of Lucas Van Leyden's Dance Around the Golden Calf," *Art History* 15 no. 3 (1992), 300-302.

"interpretative freedom" were yet to be solidified.[181] Like Dürer, he was free to seek his own mode of taking possession of the biblical narrative.

Though Koerner characterizes Baldung's endeavors to this end as "an apocalyptic fall and mortification" of the "self-glorification of the artist" that is doggedly anti-idealist and thus "resolutely medieval" in message, it is, finally, worth noting that his art took shape not in the High Middle Ages, but in a time of proto-Reform confessional uncertainty.[182] While Linda Hults, in her analysis of Baldung's work as a response to "spiritual crisis," writes of the religious upheaval of the era as conducive to "a confusing variety of answers" to key issues like the path to salvation, this time of bewilderment was nevertheless one of opportunity, too.[183] Not knowing as much as we would like about Baldung –again, certainly not in comparison to Dürer –and given the imaginative force with which so much of his work seems imbued, it is entirely possible to suppose that the gap in consensus as to the proper meaning and function of the religious image leading up to the Reformation also enacted a kind of rich freedom for the artist.[184] The environment of Strasbourg was such that he could take risks and make frequently outlandish

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[181] Bonnie Noble, *Lucas Cranach the Elder: Art and Devotion of the German Reformation* (Lanham: University Press of America ; ProQuest Ebook Central, 2009), 34, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/lib/unc/detail.action?docID=467240.N

[182] Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art,* 416. But not, as he writes in the same passage, in method. Though I am indebted to Koerner's theories –as I am sure my incessant citations of him make plain! –I am not necessarily convinced by his conclusions in this case. Because Baldung's work is so idiosyncratic and, as Koerner himself argues just a few pages later, following Hugelshofer, seemingly filtered through the "subjective personality" of the artist himself, its message –though related –seems far from identical to that of medieval apocalyptic thinkers. See Walter Hugelshofer, "Zu Hans Baldung Grien," *Pantheon* 11 (1933).

[183] Hults, *Hans Baldung Grien: Prints and Drawings,* 38.

[184] For example, altarpieces before the Reformation were subject to no regulation as to their content, corresponding to a wide range of functions. Joseph Leo Koerner, *The Reformation of the Image* (London: Reaktion Books, Limited ; ProQuest Ebook Central, 2004), 325, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu.

revisions, speculating with fresh eyes on sex, death, and what Brinkmann calls "abysses of love"[185] via familiar religious topoi.

[185] Brinkmann, "Sin Without Salvation: The Inescapable Unity of Love, Sin, and Death," 182.

CONCLUSION: Hans Baldung Grien's Reshaping of Religious Iconography as Strategy of Self-Distinguishment

What conclusions can be drawn from this assessment of Baldung's approach towards religious imagery –shockingly confident from his earliest major commission, and by 1517 so unconventional that it would have been theologically defensible from neither a Catholic nor a Protestant perspective? Before endeavoring to answer this question, it is important to first acknowledge that his inventive compositions, though fueled by his own imagination and drive, occurred in large part thanks to the path prepared by his peers and predecessors, which constitutes a final means by which to examine Baldung's own work. To this end, his teacher Dürer is, perhaps unsurprisingly, the influence most strongly felt. As Sabine Söll-Tauchert puts it, Baldung's mentor "with, for his time, exceptional intensity, and on his own initiative, explored the most diverse forms of self-portrayal and arrived at original solutions."[186] Yet even Dürer's innovation did not occur in a vacuum, and a brief assessment of select artistic strategies –both expressive and commercial –that emerged over the course of the modern era can shed some final light on Baldung's novel renderings of familiar holy topoi.

As touched upon in the first chapter, in the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance, representations of actual persons in artwork grew at once more common, more overt, and more varied. Here, Schleif's theory of "dual referencing" is worth restating; while few in the North had yet done so as audaciously as Dürer, the explicit integration of an artist's portrait, or else that of their patron, into a framework previously reserved for sacred figures became a frequent occurrence leading up to the 16th century.[187] One earlier instance of this can be witnessed in Rogier van der Weyden's Bladelin altarpiece, which shows the donors full-sized and

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[186] Sabine Söll-Trauchert, *Hans Baldung Grien (1484/85-1545): Selbstbildnis und Selbstinszenierung*. (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2010), 259. Translation mine.
[187] Corine Schleif, "Nicodemus and Sculptors: Self-Reflexivity in Works by Adam Kraft and Tilman Riemenschneider," *The Art Bulletin* 75, no. 4 (December 1993): 599.

contemporarily clad, kneeling at the manger right alongside the Holy Family (Fig. 40).[188] This process of linking real individuals to the divine realm did not remain the sole purview of wealthy donors, as artistic interest in self-representation also gained in intensity. In Dürer's 1500 self-portrait, to name a renowned example, he boldly posits his own likeness into the Vera Icon format (Fig. 39).[189]

This diversification of portraiture and rise of self-portraiture was not a phenomenon limited to German-speaking areas, but one that has been persistently linked to the humanist movement throughout all of Europe. As Joanna Woods-Marsden argues, while intellectuals in the Middle Ages paid some attention to "[q]uestions concerning humankind," it was not until the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that thinkers grew seriously preoccupied with contemplating mankind's agency and overall "place in the universe."[190] In Northern Europe, one philosopher thought to have had an impact on this line of thought is Nicholas Cusanus, whose work was likely familiar to Albrecht Dürer, and certainly to other Nüremberg humanists, notably including Willibald Pirckheimer and Dürer's publisher, Hartmann Schedel.[191] According to Cusanus, humanity's capacity to approach the divine, as well as to gain greater understanding of his own nature, lay in the imitation of God's "generative facility."[192] Expanding on this, Koerner holds that Dürer's adoption of the Vera Icon format, though still a way of augmenting his own status,

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[188] Just two give two striking examples of this effect –as discussed in chapter one, it was truly a prevalent mode.
[189] Koerner breaks down nicely why this seeming act of sheer hubris would not have been posited thus at the time. Joseph Leo Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art* (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 99–140.
[190] Joanna Woods-Marsden, *Renaissance Self-Portraiture: The Visual Construction of Identity and the Social Status of the Artist* (New Haven ; London: Yale University Press, 1998), 14–15.
[191] Christopher P. Heuer, "Dürer's Folds," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 59/60 (Spring/Autumn 2011): 254–55.
[192] Ibid, 255. For a more expansive discussion of Cusanus's ideas and their potential impact on Dürer, see Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art*, 127–38 and 179–83.

was backed by a pious spiritual understanding of art-making as an emulation of the first Creator and, hence, a fulfillment of his plan.[193]

Along with *portraits historiés* and self-portraits*,* a new attitude towards landscapes set artists of Baldung's era further apart from those of generations prior. Perhaps no other artist's work is more indicative of this bent than that of Albrecht Altdorfer. As Larry Silver points out, Altdorfer's stunning landscape miniatures "almost invariably represent *religious* narratives," with settings that "calculatingly situate…sacred events in appropriately sacred spaces, even when those spaces consisted of powerful renditions of natural wilderness."[194] In spite of the religiosity implicitly or explicitly inscribed in Altdorfer's wilderness scenes, his attention to the aesthetics of the natural world often threatens to subsume their devotional utility, and, as with Baldung, any moral didacticism must be inferred. Moreover, Altdorfer's transposition of divine figures into forest settings that, however majestic, are obviously contemporaneous with the artist's own time and place, enters them into the sphere of the quotidian. In his *Rest on the Flight Into Egypt,* for example, Mary, Joseph, and the Christ-child are all but indistinguishable from ordinary travellers, while the castle and mountains looming in the distance look distinctly south German (Fig. 41).

These peers and forerunners engaged in a reshaping or re-situating of sacred symbols comparable to but distinct from what Baldung accomplishes in his reinterpretation of spiritual topoi. While Baldung is not always directly concerned with the assertion of his own likeness or native landscape, the examples brought forth in this thesis are indicative of his approach to art-making, which constitutes its own form of self-articulation. The infusion of local or individual

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[193] He does, however, make the distinction that Cusanus's work does not explain Dürer's self-portrait in total. Instead, it constitutes part of a broader strand of pious discourse that may have helped Dürer explain this singular work to his contemporaries. Koerner, 137–38.

[194] Silver, Larry. "Nature and Nature's God: Landscape and Cosmos of Albrecht Altdorfer." *The Art Bulletin* 81, no. 2 (1999): 194.

identity markers into religious scenes served, for Dürer, to posit the artist as "universal human subject," and for Altdorfer, to "familiari[ze and] desublima[te]" holy subjects.[195] For Baldung, however, as Koerner argues at length, an individual treatment of these same topics enacts a subtle method of destabilization that renders them less universal, instead of more so, while at the same time lending them layers of complex affective depth; if we relate to Baldung's dead Christ or his anguished first couple, the identification is not a wholly welcome one.[196]

Thus, although I do not mean to suggest that Baldung sought to establish himself entirely in opposition to Dürer, Altdorfer, or other contemporaries, one might consider the often unsettling, psychologically involved, and sometimes theologically indefensible elements of his artwork as a self-distinguishing technique. It is true that not all successful craftsmen of the early modern era developed such a unique brand, and that the availability of new genres was no guarantor of innovation. For example, consider Hans Süss von Kulmbach, who also trained in Dürer's workshop, but whose compositions tend to hew far closer to those of his master than do Baldung's, and are on the whole more conventional; a comparison of his Adoration painting with that of Baldung is one example of this (Figure 42). However, given the emergence of fresh creative modes around this time, along with the growing trend towards artistic individualization and self-assertion, there is reason to believe that Baldung's idiosyncratic approach functioned to render his work more recognizable and, thereby, more profitable.

For the Renaissance artist, developing a cohesive and distinctive style evolved as a clear economic advantage. Writing on the workshop of highly successful Würzburg sculptor Tilman Riemenschneider, Jeffrey Chipps Smith discusses the practical and logistical consequences of establishing an aesthetic handwriting of one's own:

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[195] Koerner, Joseph Leo. *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art*, xvii; Wood, *Albrecht Altdorfer and the Origins of Landscape,* 349.
[196] Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture,* 249-411.

> "Riemenschneider's reliance upon skilled assistants to collaborate on some commissions and to execute others completely was standard workshop practice across German-speaking lands at the end of the fifteenth century and in the opening years of the sixteenth. This was especially true for successful artists juggling multiple orders or producing retables, which involved the participation of joiners and in some cases painters in addition to one or more sculptors."[197]

Smith goes on to note how Dürer, who usually followed a similar system, found himself seriously regretting his agreement to complete Jakob Heller's commission for the now-lost *Death and the Coronation of the Virgin* on his own.[198] Of course, though reliant on assistants, neither Dürer nor Riemenschneider would have achieved such renown without having first defined a signature artistic method. A. Hyatt Mayor remarks on Dürer's tendency to hold his woodcutters to a standard of "autographic faithfulness," endeavoring that they should adhere to "the quirks of a personal draftsmanship" in order to maintain as much of the artistic hand as was then possible to convey via the inherently replicative medium of print.[199] The high quality and unique features of their artwork was the necessitating factor for Dürer and Riemenschneider's formulation of the well-organized workshops that helped increase their output and spread their fame.

While the goings-on of Baldung's workshop are far less clear than those of either Dürer or Riemenschneider, even without knowing whether he employed assistants, it seems natural that his unprecedented renditions of religious standards constitute a comparable, though of course not identical, method of branding, in keeping with humanist concerns with self-fashioning. Like any working artist, Baldung did not develop his compositions solely for the love of doing so, but also

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[197] Jeffrey Chipps Smith, "A Fragile Legacy: Würzburg's Sculpture after Riemenschneider," in *Tilman Riemenschneider, c. 1460-1531* (Washington: National Gallery of Art; Distributed by Yale University Press, 2004), 181.
[198] Ibid, 182.
[199] A. Hyatt Mayor, "A Historical Survey of Printmaking," *Art Education* 17, no. 4 (April 1964): 5. For more on the Nuremberg printmaking industry, and Dürer's role therein, see Jeffrey Ashcroft, "Black Arts: Renaissance and Printing Press in Nuremberg, 1493–1528: For Peter Branscombe," *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 45, no. 1 (January 2009): 3–18.

in order to sell them. Although the attitude with which his artworks would have been received, as discussed especially in Chapter 1, is impossible to fully reconstruct, by recombining iconographic schemes in a manner no other artist had thought of, he supplied his audience with a kind of product that could not be found elsewhere.

As for said audience, as Thomas A. Brady notes, Baldung's known clientele varied widely; for example, he completed glasswork designs of familial arms for a whole range of individuals – "bishops of Strasbourg and Basel; Nikolaus Ziegler, Imperial Chancellor and Lord of Barr; powerful families of the Upper Rhenish nobility" –while also carrying out portraits of key players in the Strasbourg Reformation, such as Jacob Sturm and Claus Kniebis.[200] Who among this impressive array of social contacts would have sought after such unusual reconfigurations of the Man of Sorrows type as *Christ Carried to Heaven by Angels*? Likewise, who would have purchased such eroticized yet unhappy fall of Man scenes as the one implied by his *Adam and Eve* of 1519, a topic which, as Hinz notes, had ceased with Dürer to remain a strictly biblical topic, and rather blossomed into one that could carry messages about human nature and creation more broadly?[201]

Likely, Baldung's work appealed to Strasbourg's intellectual humanist faction, and especially to those who could appreciate what is often interpreted as a "devilish" sense of humor that compelled him to, for instance, send a friend "a new year's card of three naked witches in lascivious poses," coupled with the caption "'To the cleric, a good year.'"[202] Worth invoking, in conclusion, is Weber am Bach's assertion of Baldung's close friendship with Johannes

[200] Brady, "The Social Place of a German Renaissance Artist: Hans Baldung Grien (1484/85-1545) at Strasbourg," 313-14.
[201] Hinz, "Baldung and Dürer: Nudes and the Occasions for Depicting Them," 212.
[202] Talbot, "Baldung and the Female Nude," 31.

Rudalphinger, the chaplain of Strasbourg Münster and author of Thomas Sporer's *Epicedion.*[203] Rudalphinger was a public figure who saw no incompatibility between commending the deceased composer to Apollo and practicing Protestantism. Amongst companions such as these, products of a social climate wherein piety, classical allegory, and humanist interest in mankind's potential as well as his folly could intermingle in relative harmony, Baldung's imaginative perspective on familiar subjects allowed him to make a name and career for himself as a purveyor of images with the capacity to challenge and engage. [204]

[203] Weber am Bach, *Hans Baldung Grien (1484/85-1545): Marienbilder in der Reformation*, 70.
[204] Hence the humanist interest in satirical modes of societal critiques. Sebastian Brant, *The Ship of Fools*, trans. Edwin H. Zeydel (New York: Dover Publications, 1962).

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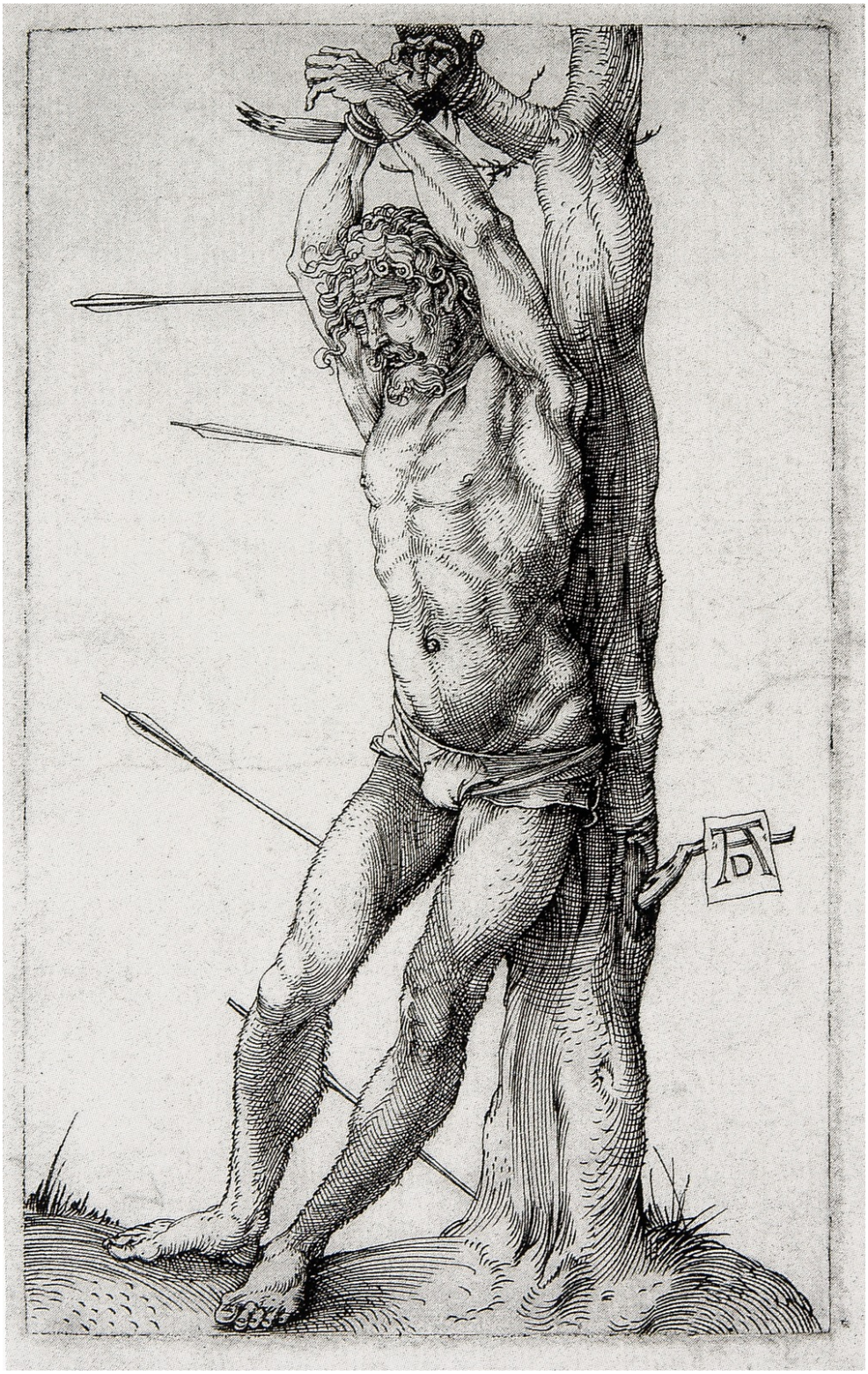

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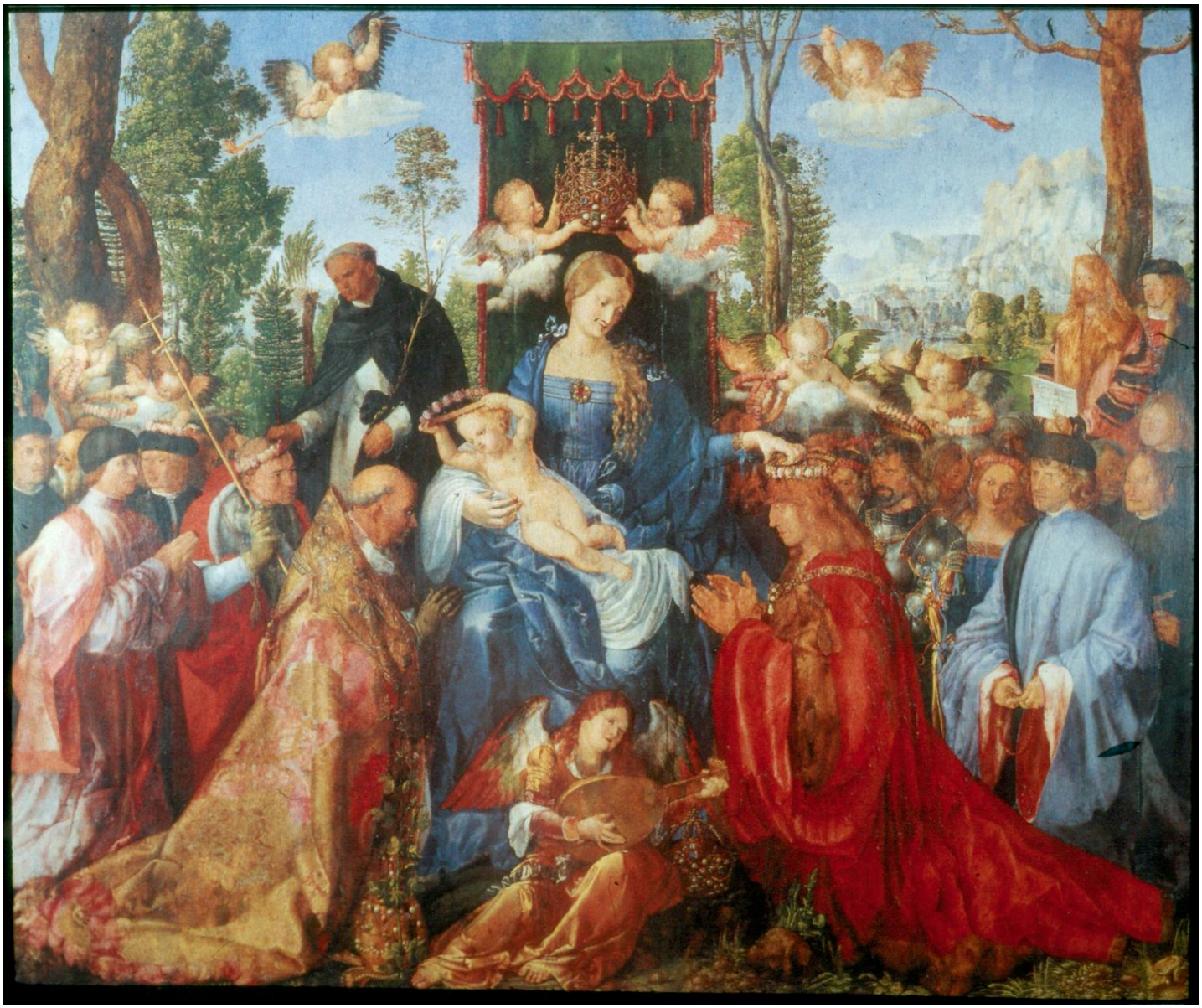

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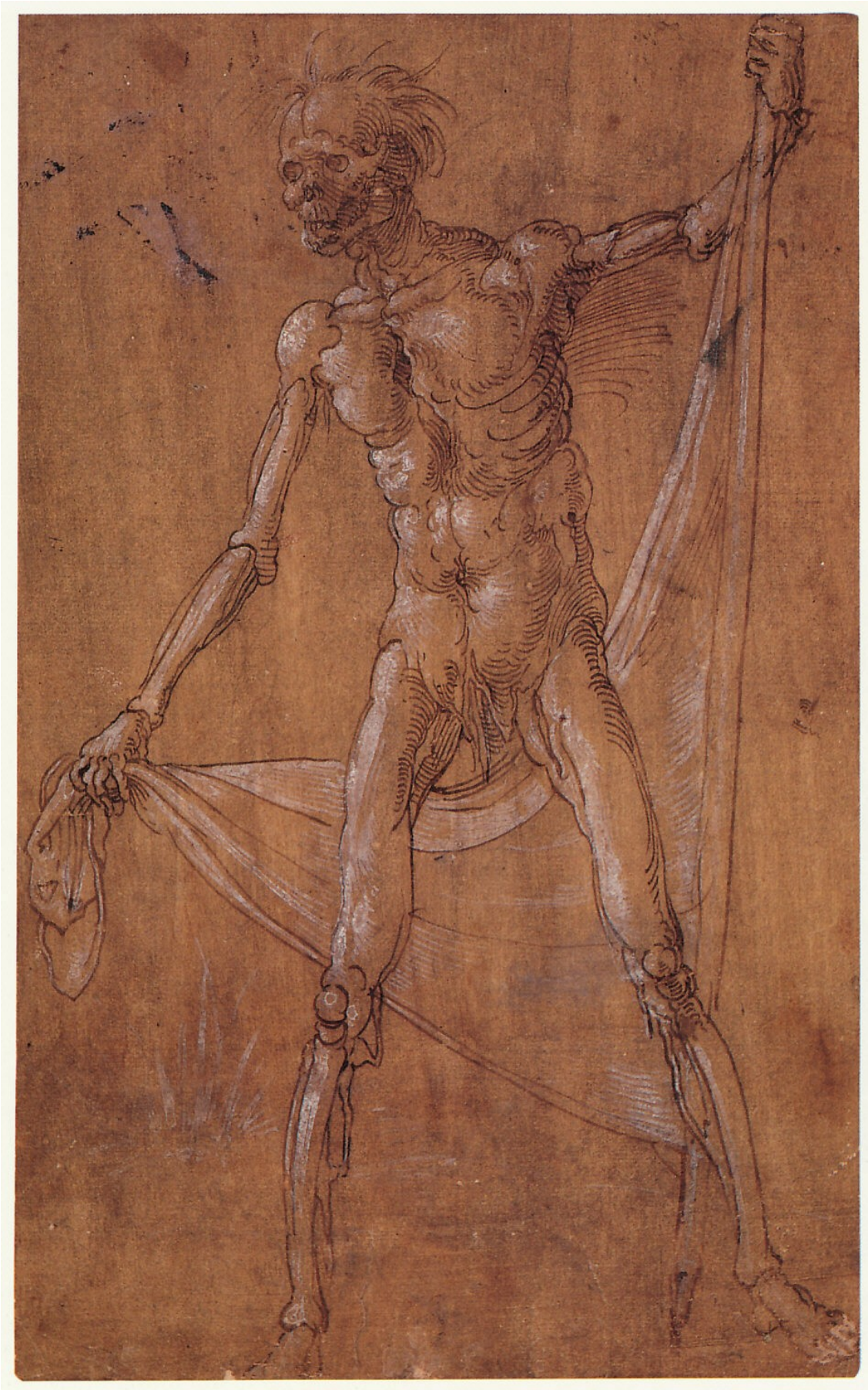

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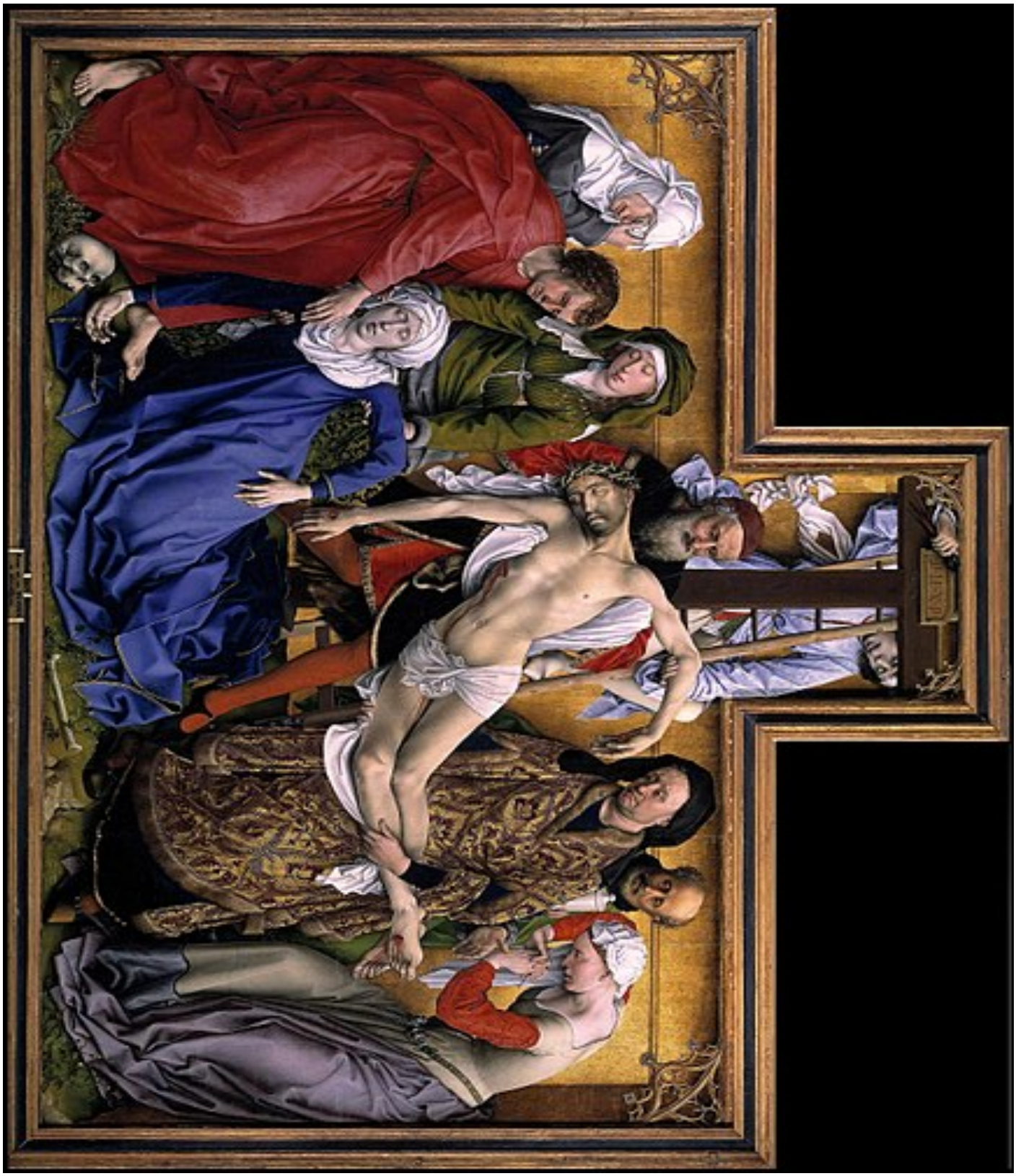

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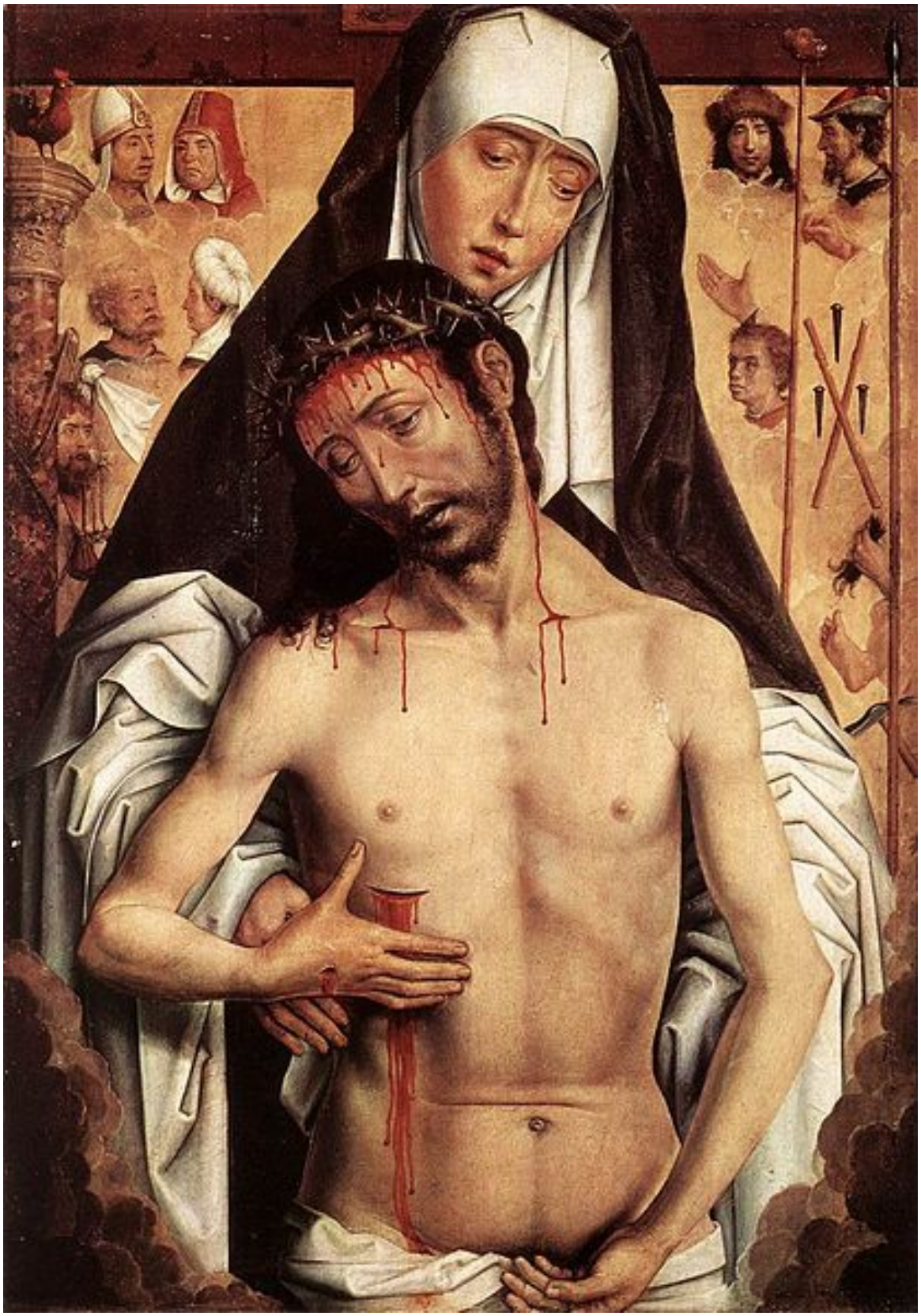

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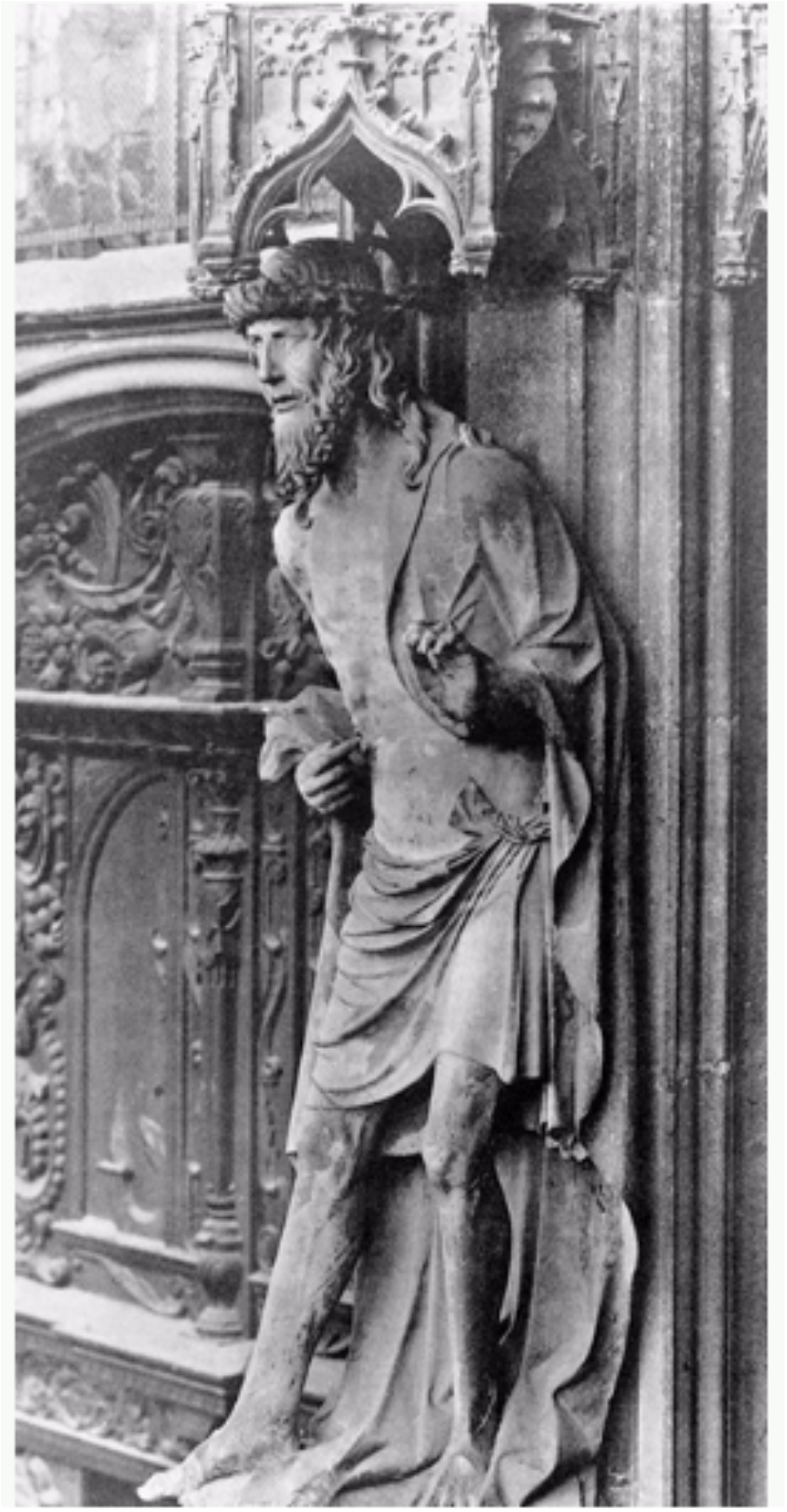

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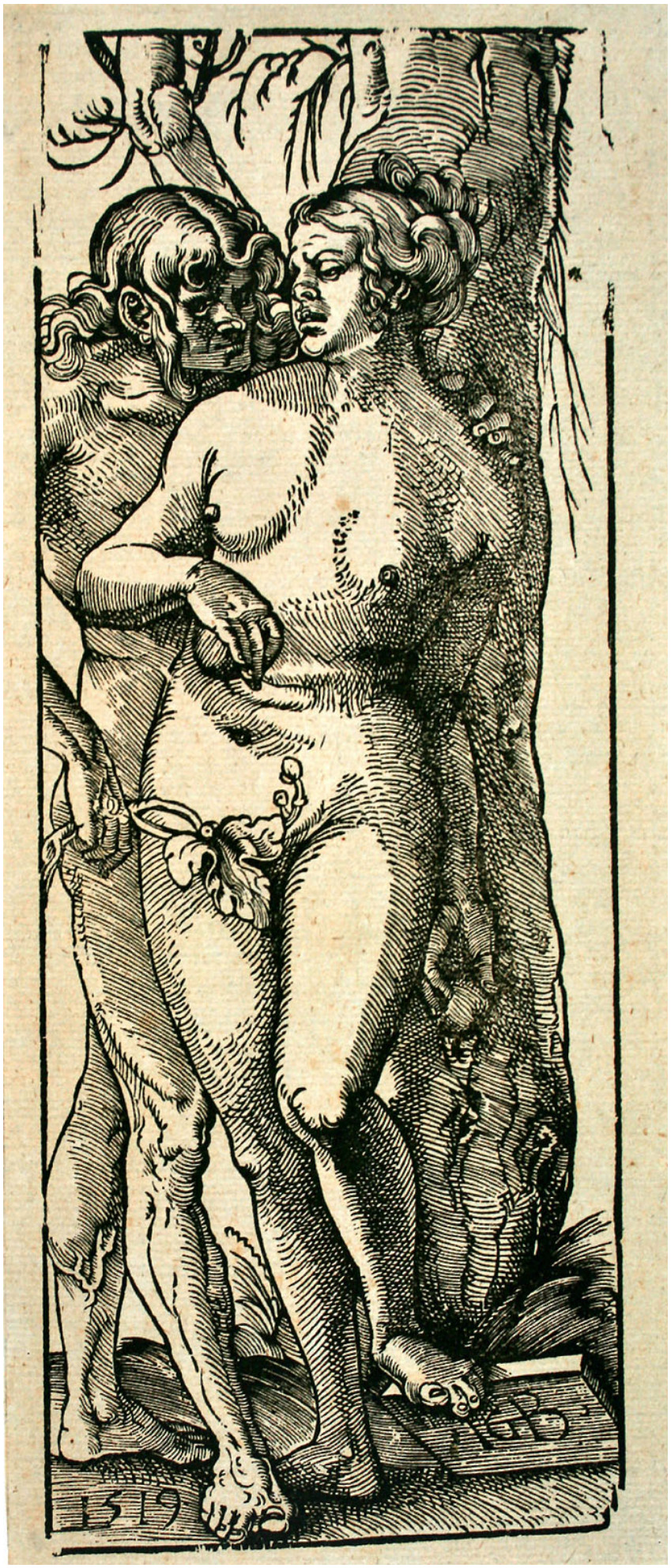

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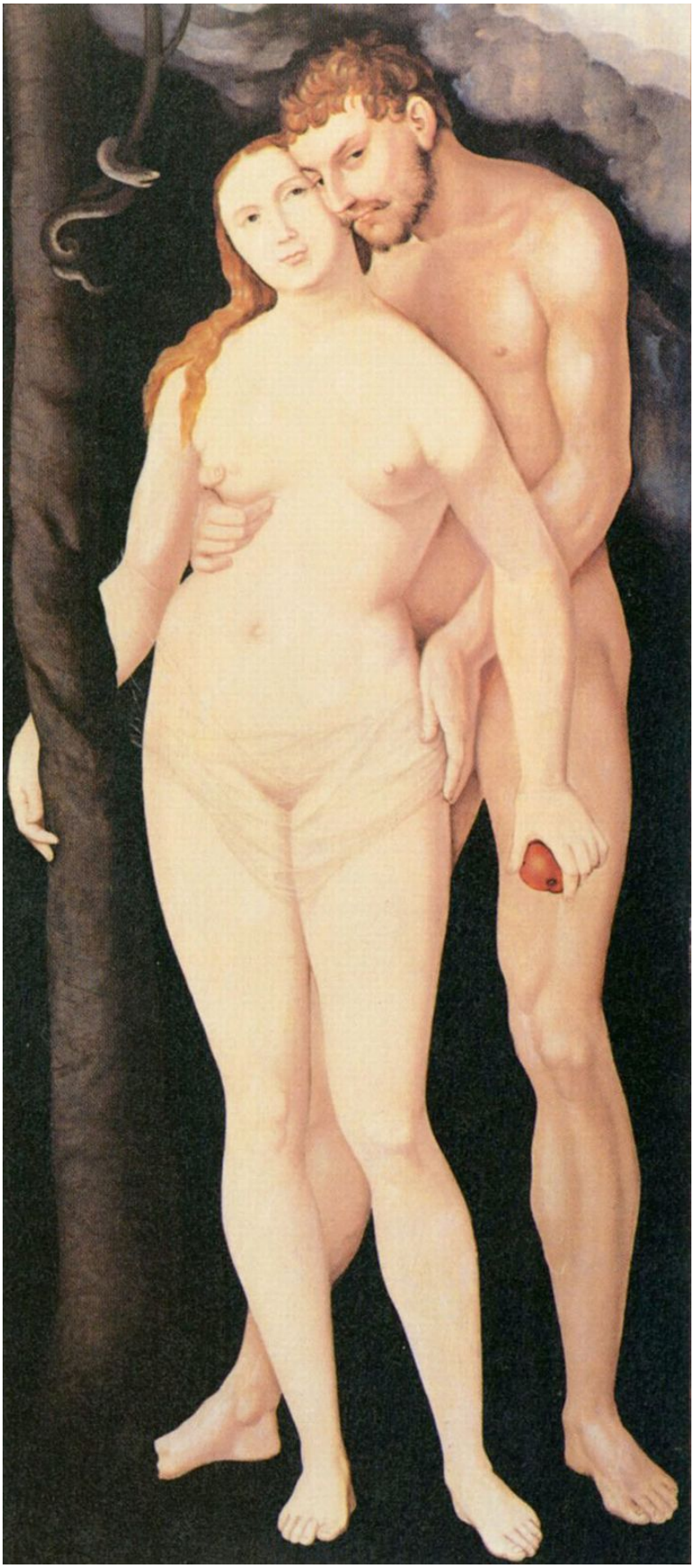

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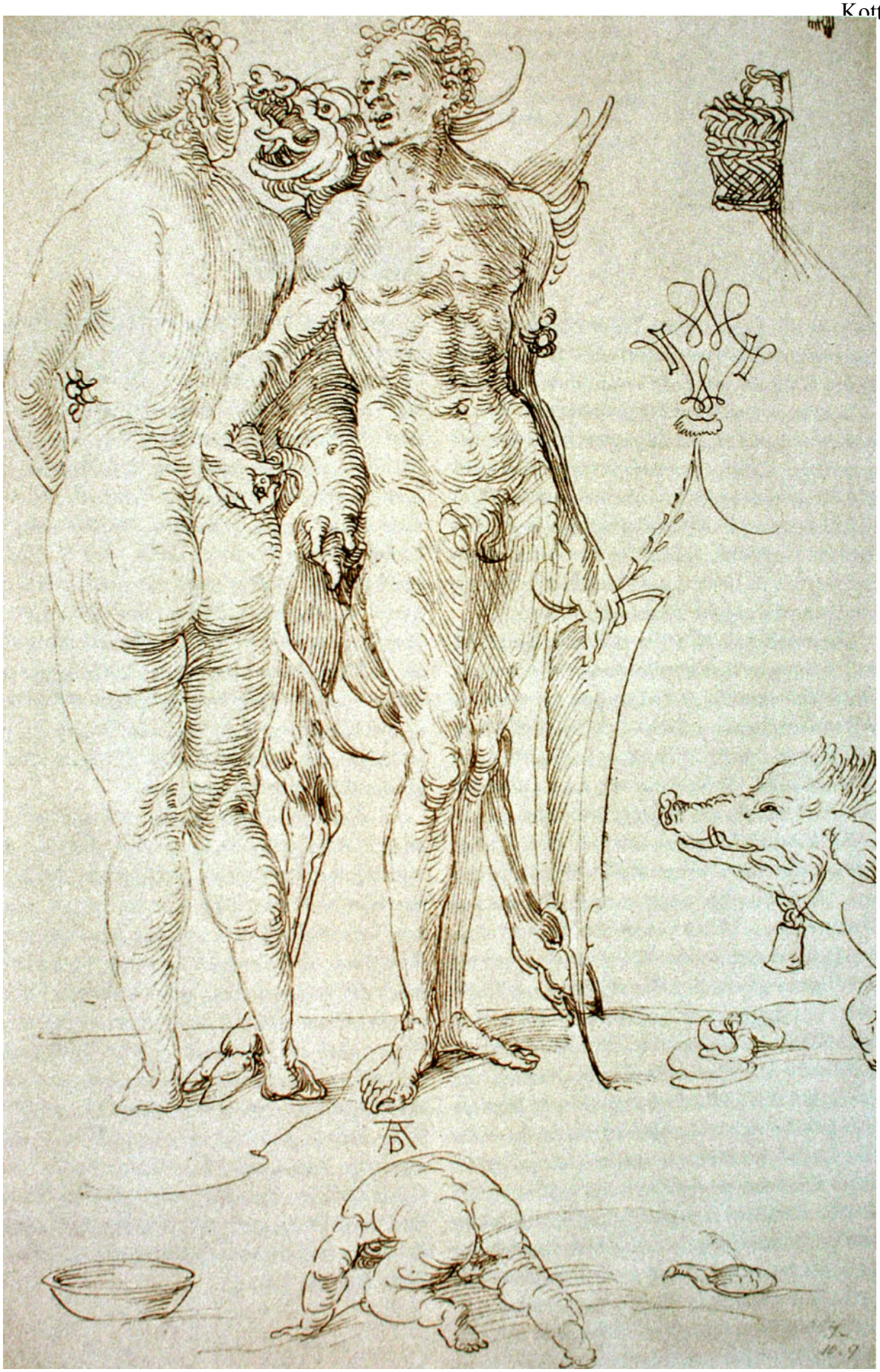

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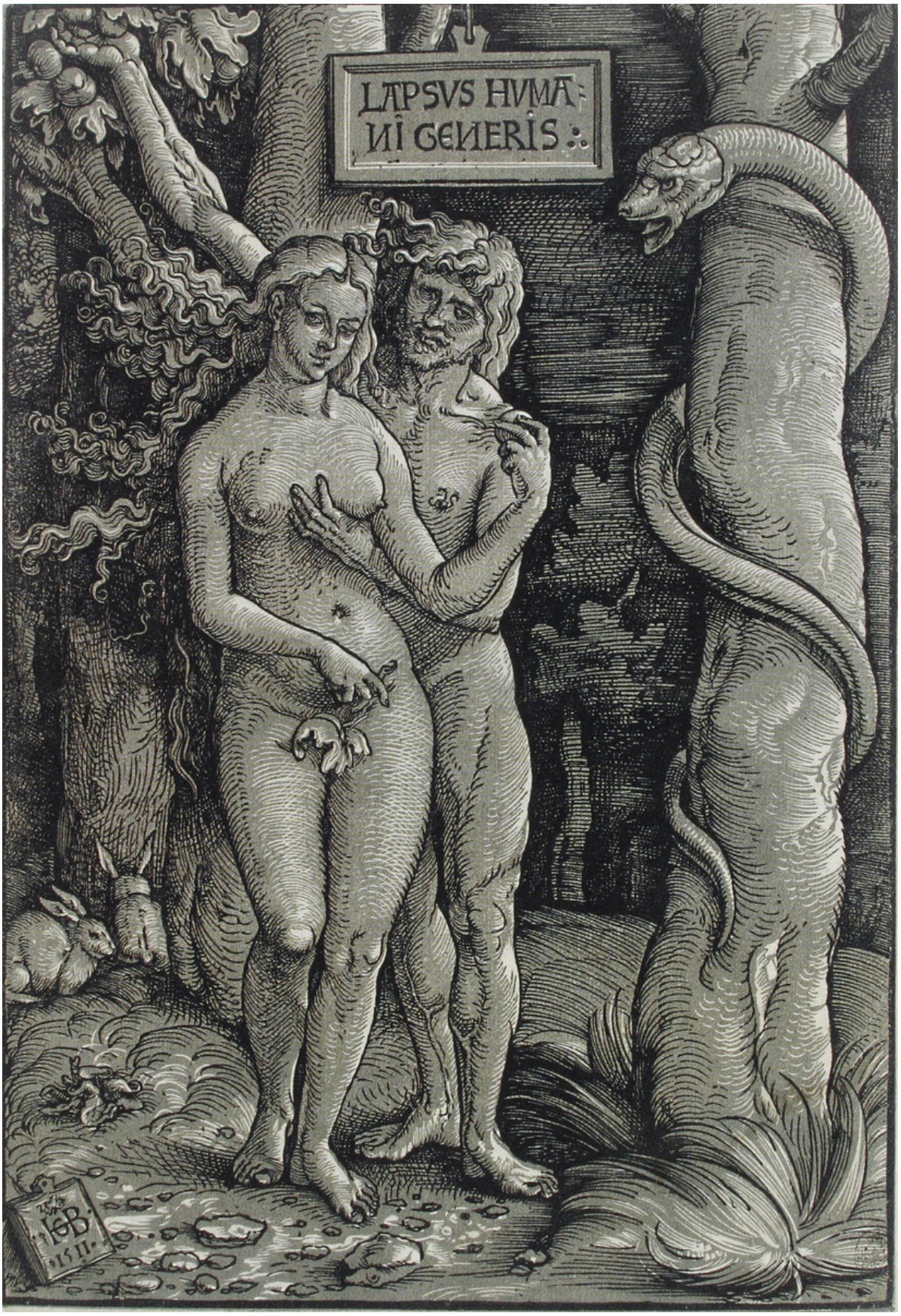

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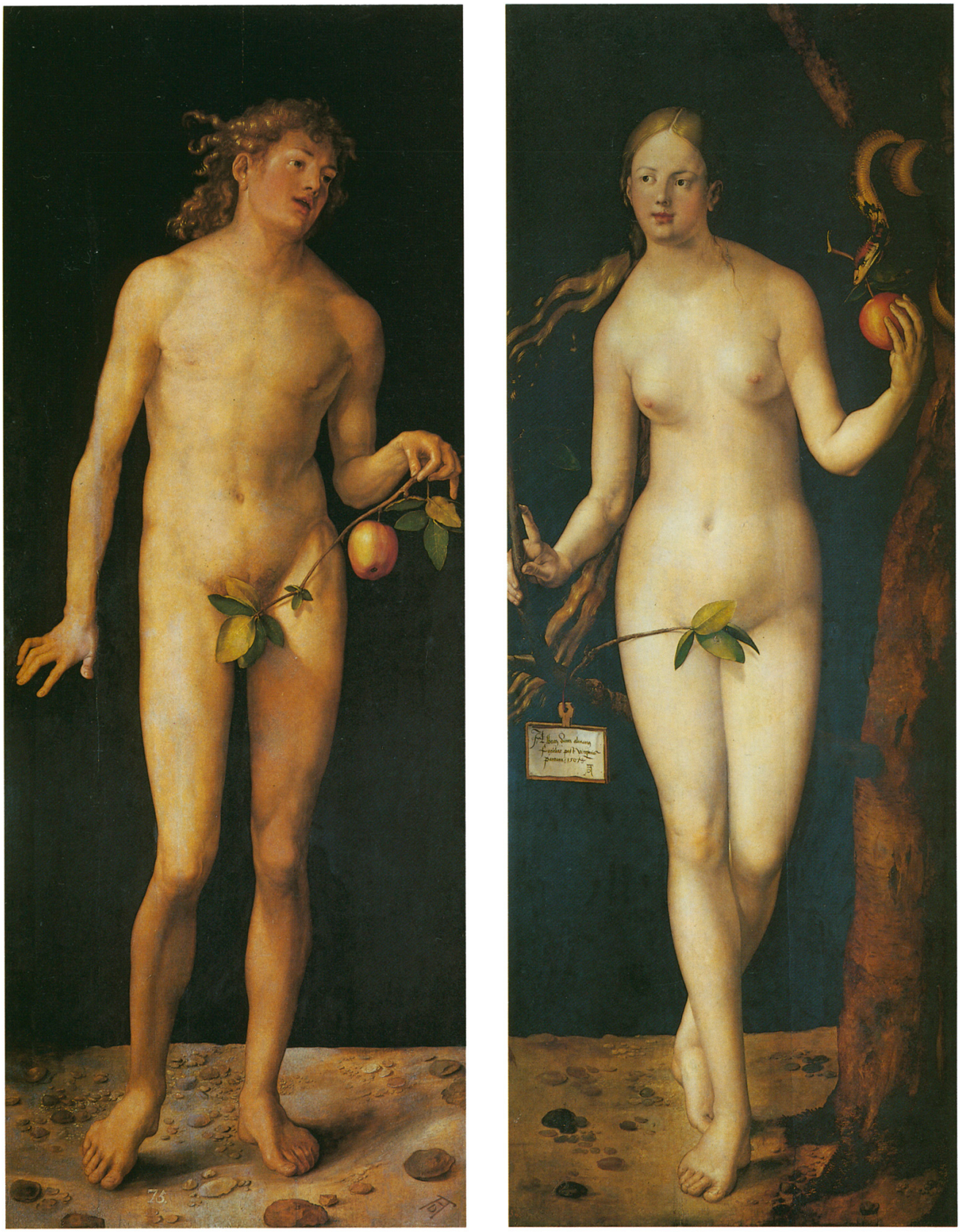

Figure 33: Albrecht Dürer, c. 1507. *Adam and Eve.* Oil on panel: 209 x 81 cm each. Madrid: Museo del Prado. Photo: Prometheus.

Figure 34: Albrecht Dürer, c. 1510. *Adam and Eve from the Small Passion.* Woodcut: 12.9 x 9.8 cm. Berlin. Photo: Prometheus.

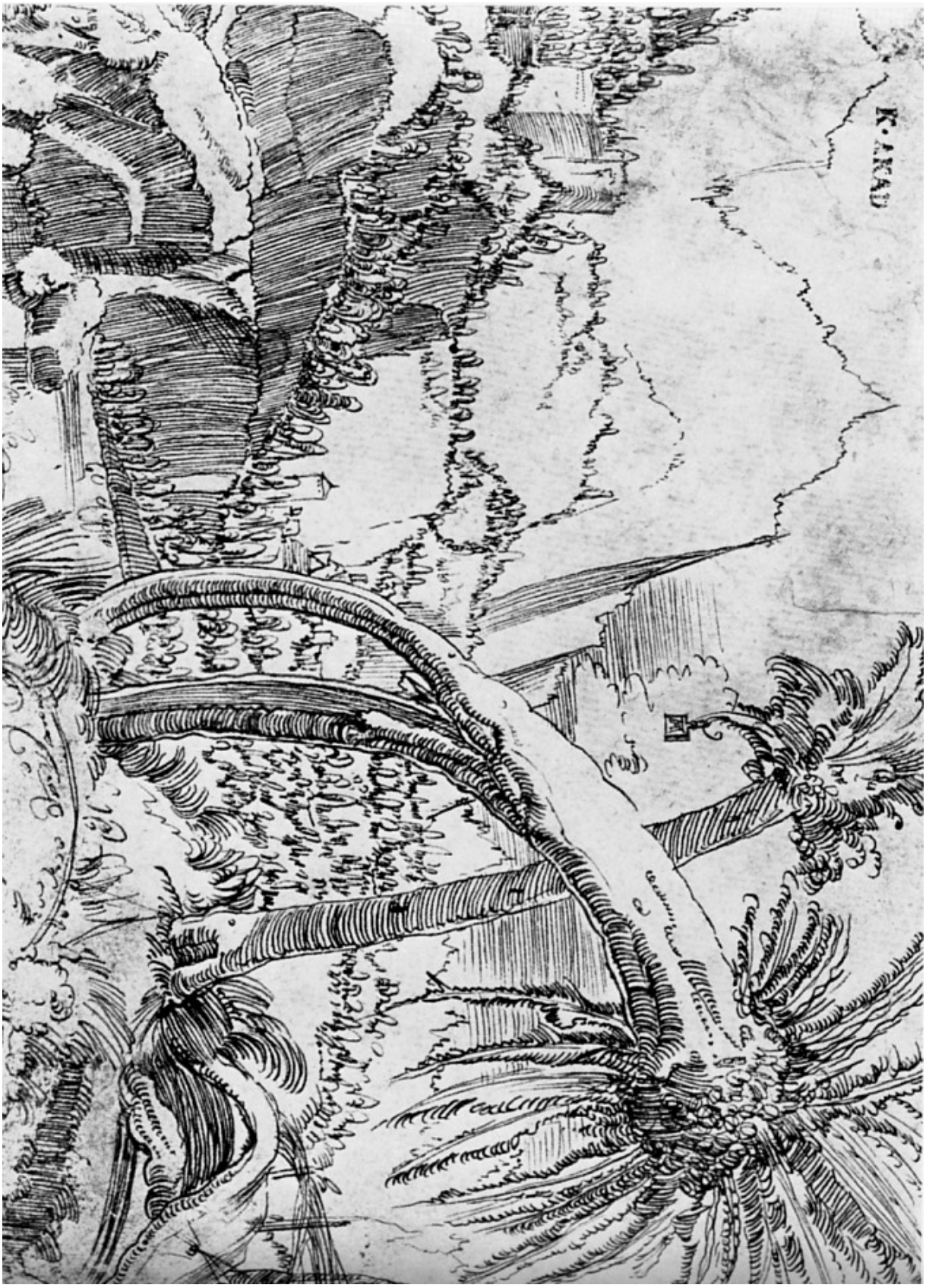

Figure 35: Albrecht Altdorfer, c. 1511. *Alpine Landscape with Willow Trees.* Pen: 942 x 678 cm. Vienna: Academy of Fine Arts. Photo: Prometheus.

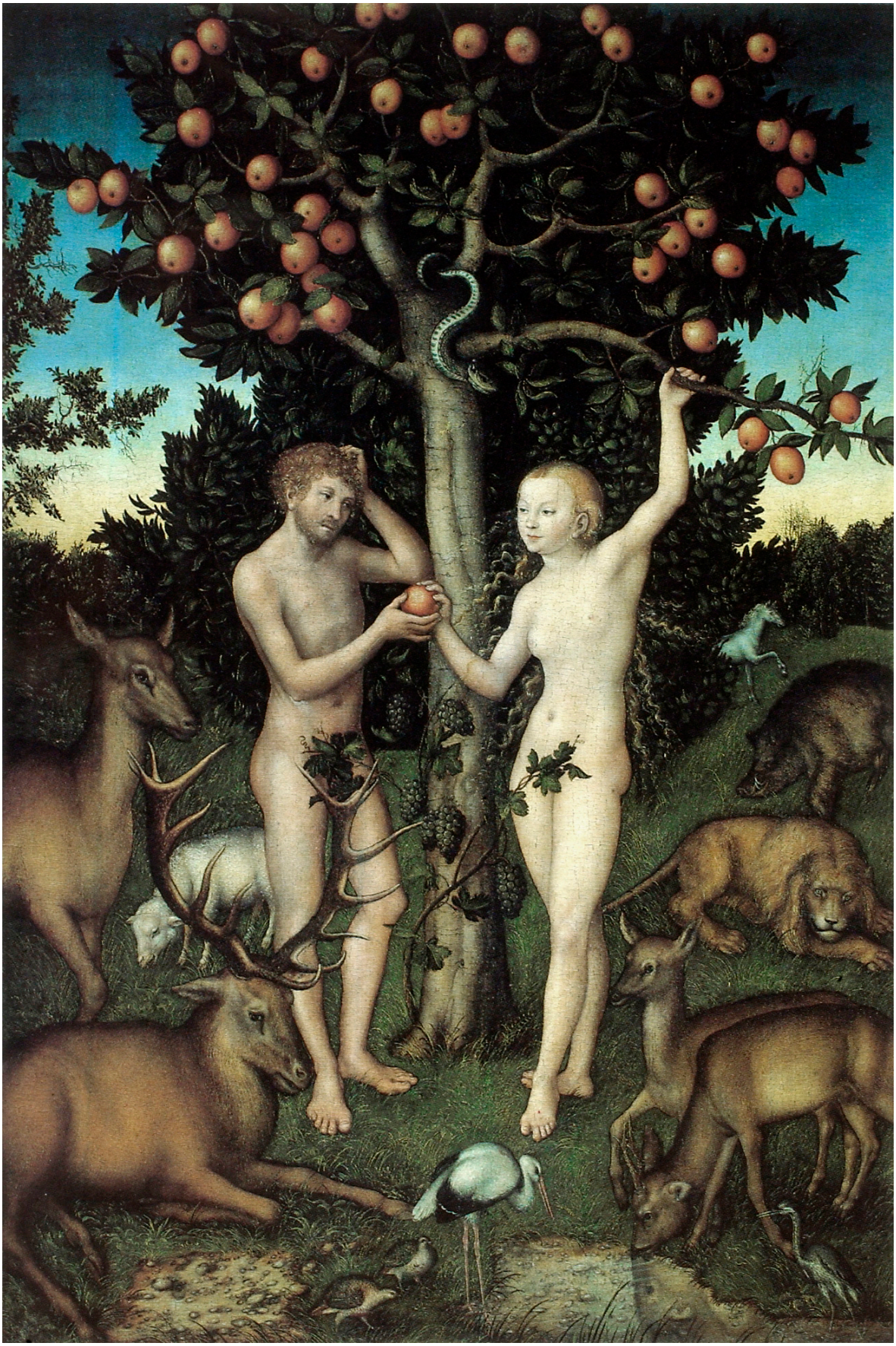

Figure 36: Lucas Cranach the Elder, c. 1526. *Adam and Eve.* Oil on panel: 117 x 80 cm. London: Courtauld Institute of Art Gallery. Photo: Prometheus.

Figure 37: Lucas van Leyden, 1529. *The Fall.* Engraving: 16.4 x 11.6 cm. Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum. Photo: Prometheus.

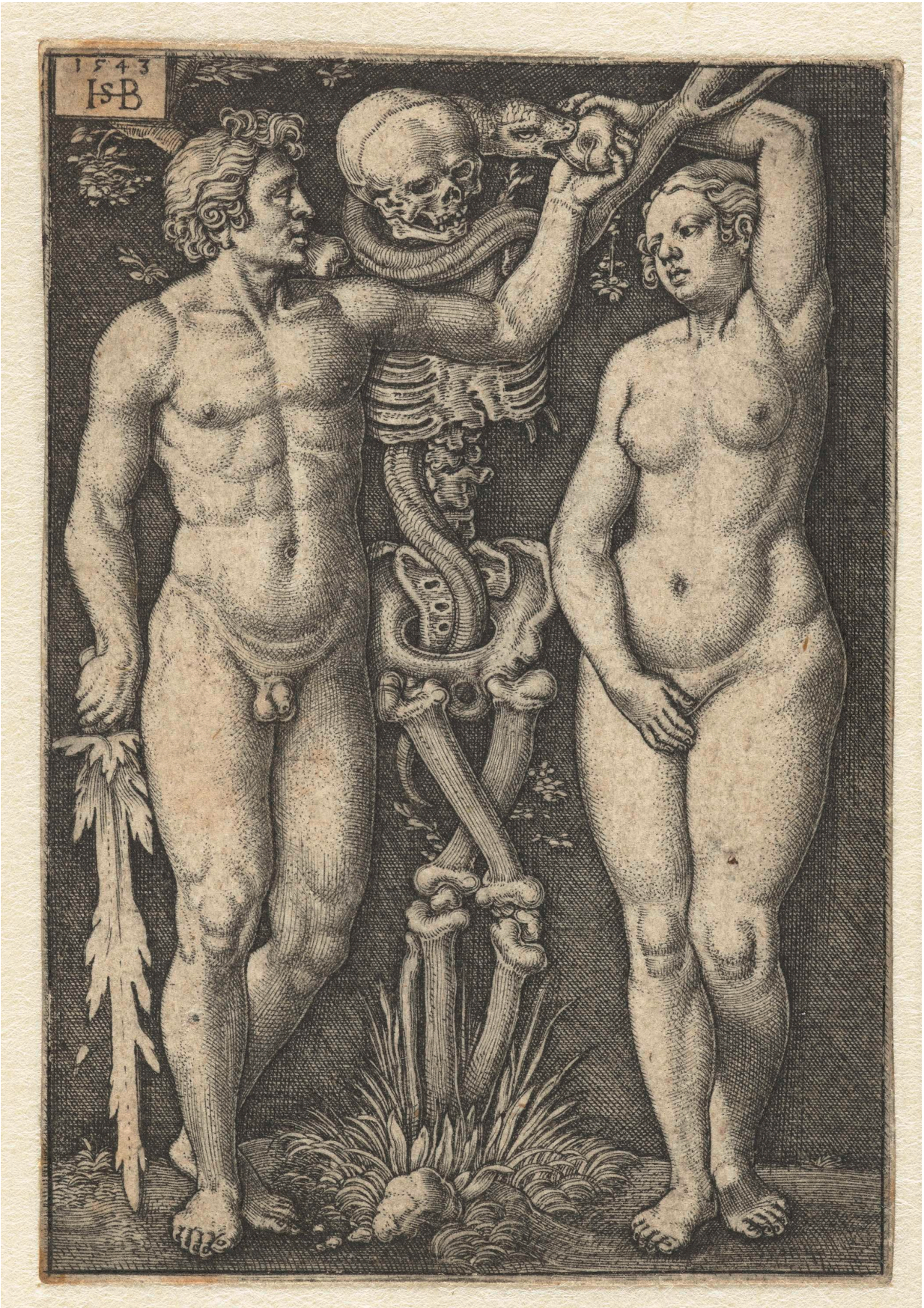

Figure 38: Hans Sebald Beham, 1543. *Adam, Eve, and Death.* Engraving: 8.2 x 5.7 cm. Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum. Photo: Prometheus.

Figure 39: Albrecht Dürer, 1500. *Self Portrait.* Oil on panel; 67.1 x 48. 7 cm. Munich: Alte Pinakothek. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 40: Rogier van der Weyden, 1445-50. *Bladelin Altarpiece (central panel).* Oil on oak panel. 91 x 89 cm. Berlin: Staatliche Museen. Photo: Artstor.

Figure 41: Albrecht Altdorfer, 1506-1538. *Rest on the Flight Into Egypt.* Engraving: 9.8 x 5.2 cm. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art. Photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Figure 42: Hans Süss von Kulmbach, 1511. *Adoration of the Magi.* Oil on panel: 153 x 110 cm. Berlin: Staatliche Museem. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.